

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

<b>TUSLA Identifier:</b>	TU2015DL147			
<b>Name of Service:</b>	Wonder Years ECCE Ltd			
<b>Address of Service:</b>	Rossbracken, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal			
<b>Eircode:</b>	F92 TX99			
<b>Name of Registered Provider:</b>	Marcella McNamee			
<b>Service type:</b>	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional			
<b>Date(s) of Inspection:</b>	08/11/2023			
<b>Date 2 of Inspection:</b>	09/11/2023			
<b>No of pre-school children:</b>	AM	176	PM	122
<b>Day 2</b>	AM	167	PM	128
<b>Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:</b>	Donegal Early Years Inspectorate, St. Conal's Campus, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal. F95 XK94			
<b>Inspection undertaken by:</b>	N. McEndoo and L. Costello			
<b>Title:</b>	Early Years Inspectors			

### Authority to Inspect

The Tusla Early Years Inspectorate carries out inspections of Early Years Services under Section 58(J) of the Child Care Act 1991 (as inserted by Section 92 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013).

### Conditions if applicable

Not applicable

### Description of service

Wonder Years Childcare Centre has been in operational since 2002. It is privately governed by a limited company of the same name. The service is registered for the provision of a full day care service for pre-school children aged 0 - 6 year. A school age service is also provided. The service operates weekdays from 8.30am to 5.30pm and includes a sessional service from 9.00.am to 12.00pm. The facility lies in the rural townland of Rossbracken, eight kilometres outside the Letterkenny, Co. Donegal. The premises is set out over seven acres of land, which has been subdivided to create different outdoor play facilities for children. In the main building there are four care rooms on the ground floor and four care rooms on the first floor. There is a kitchen for preparing meals and snacks and the relevant ancillary facilities. The outdoor facilities consist of six garden rooms, each with their own sanitary facilities, garden and play area. There are a further three standalone care rooms each with their own sleep room, sanitary facilities, and play area. There is a large purpose-built playground, a forest trail and an area available for growing fruit and vegetables.

### Staffing

There were 35 adults present on the day of inspection, including the manager and the registered provider, who were both available to staff in a supernumerary capacity throughout the day of inspection. Adults working directly with children held a relevant qualification in early childhood care and education.

### Methodology

Tusla's Early Years Inspectorate is the independent statutory regulator of early years services in Ireland. The Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 define the duty of a registered provider to ensure the safety and well-being of children and to comply with these regulations. This Act also gives Tusla the authority to assess compliance with the regulations. The purpose of regulation in relation to early years services is to ensure that the care, safety, and well-being of children attending such services is upheld. Inspections of early years services are planned based on the following:

- Previous inspection history
- Any information received in relation to the service

The findings on inspection are based on:

- Information obtained through examination of documentation
- Direct observation
- Discussion with relevant staff

This inspection was unannounced and focused on the area of governance, health, welfare and development of child and safety.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under the following: Regulation 9 – Management and recruitment, Regulation 10 – Policies, procedures etc. of pre-school service Regulation 11 - Staffing levels, Regulation 16 (k) – Record in relation to pre-school service, Regulation 18 – Copy of Act, Regulation 19 - Health, welfare and development of child, Regulation 23 - Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child, Regulation 25 - First aid, and Regulation 28 – Insurance.

These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

Inspection findings are documented in the inspection report which is first issued in draft format to the service with an opportunity to respond to any findings. Where statutory requirements are identified as not being met, the registered provider must demonstrate how they have rectified the non-compliance and will prevent any non-compliance from re occurring. The Corrective Action and Preventive Action plan (CAPA) will be used to inform decisions about compliance with regulatory requirements. Where the registered provider fails to meet the statutory requirements an escalation process may be commenced.

The inspectorate reserves the right to edit responses received for reasons including clarity, completeness and compliance with administrative and legal processes.

The contents of the report are compiled by the inspectorate body.

## Acknowledgments

The inspectors wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, person in charge, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

### Part III – Management and Staff

#### Regulation 9 – Management and recruitment

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that-

- (a) the service has a designated person in charge and a named person who is able to deputise as required,
- (b) at all times during the period when the pre-school service is being carried on, the designated person in charge or the named person referred to in subparagraph (a) is on the premises, and
- (c) there is a clear management structure in the service that identifies the lines of authority and accountability in the service and the specific roles and responsibilities of each employee and unpaid worker.

(2) A registered provider shall ensure that each employee, unpaid worker and contractor is suitable and competent taking into consideration the nature of the needs of children, including by-

- (a) consideration of references from the person's past employers, if any, and in particular the most recent employer, if any,
- (b) consideration of references from reputable sources in the case of a person who has no past employers,
- (c) consideration of the vetting disclosure received from the National Vetting Bureau of the Garda Síochána in accordance with the Act of 2012 in respect of the person, and
- (d) ensuring, insofar as is practicable, that where a person has lived in a state other than the State for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months, he or she provides police vetting from the police authorities in that state.

(3) The procedures specified in paragraph (2) shall be carried out prior to any person being appointed, assigned or allowed access to or contact with a child attending the pre-school service.

(4) A registered provider shall ensure that, without prejudice to the generality of paragraph (2) and subject to paragraphs (5) and (6), each employee working directly with children attending the service holds at least a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 on the National Qualifications Framework or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

#### Compliance Information

(1)

- (a) There was a designated person in charge and a named adult to deputise in their absence.
- (b) The designated person in charge was available on the premises throughout the period of inspection.
- (c) There was a clear management structure in the service that identifies the lines of authority and accountability in the service and the specific roles and responsibilities of each employee.

(2) On the day of inspection, all 35 files were reviewed. 26 adults were employed to work directly with the children, three adults worked in the office, three adults in the kitchen and two adults worked in the gardens and maintenance and the registered provider.

The following vetting information was available for the 35 adults:

- (a) Two written validated references from past employers for all 35 of the adults a reputable source in the absence of a past employer.
- (c) Vetting disclosures from the National Vetting Bureau of the Garda Síochána for all 35 adults.
- (d) International police vetting documentation was available for one adult as they had lived outside of the jurisdiction for longer than 6 months while over the age of 18 years.

(4) 26 of the adult files reviewed, evidenced they held a major award at level 5 or above in early childhood care and education on the national qualification framework.

### Non-Compliance Information

(3) The procedures specified in paragraph (2)(c) were not always carried out. Of the 35 adult files reviewed on the day of inspection, it was determined three adults did not have all relevant checks and considerations made, in relation to being suitable and competent, carried out prior to the adults being appointed. Vetting disclosures from the National Vetting Bureau of the Garda Síochána were carried out after the three adults were appointed.

### Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

#### Corrective and Preventive Action

Vetting will be obtained prior to any educator commencing work at Wonder years.

The quality professional development officer will apply for vetting after the candidate has successfully completed the interview process. Date for commencement of employment will be scheduled after receipt of satisfactory vetting

#### Supporting documentation submitted

Documentary evidence submitted.

### Summary Comment

The corrective and preventive actions submitted by the registered provider has been reviewed by the inspectorate and the non-compliance found on inspection in relation to regulation 9 have been resolved and this regulation is now compliant.

### Part III – Management and Staff

#### Regulation 10 - Policies, procedures etc. of pre-school service

*A registered provider of a pre-school service shall ensure that the written policies, procedures and statements specified in Schedule 5 are in place for the service.*

#### Compliance Information

The policies, procedures and statements specified in Schedule 5 were in place for the service. The following policies were reviewed and deemed to meet the regulatory requirement.

- Accident and Incident
- Recruitment

### Part III – Management and Staff

#### Regulation 11 - Staffing levels

*(1) Subject to this Regulation, a registered provider shall ensure that there is at all times an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the pre-school service.*

*(2) Subject to paragraphs (4) and (5), a registered provider of a full day care service or a part-time day care service shall ensure that at all times the minimum ratio of adults to children specified in column (3) of Part 1 of Schedule 6 opposite a particular reference number specified in column (1) of that Part in respect of the age range of the children specified in column (2) thereof at that reference number is satisfied.*

*(3) Subject to paragraph (5), a registered provider of a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that at all times the minimum ratio of adults to children specified in column (3) of Part 2 of Schedule 6 opposite a particular reference number specified in column (1) of that Part in respect of the age range of the children specified in column (2) therefore at that reference number is satisfied.*

### Compliance Information

- (1) The registered provider ensured that there was an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the service. When the inspector arrived unannounced, there were 35 staff members working directly with 176 children. The person in charge was also available to the staff as and when required.
- (2) The registered provider ensured that on the day of inspection, the adult to child ratio was always maintained at the minimum specified ratios.
- (3) On a review of records, the registered provider ensured that the minimum ratio of adults to children were maintained at all times.

### Part IV – Information and Records

#### Regulation 16 – Record in relation to pre-school service

*(1) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of the following information in relation to the service:*

*(k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.*

### Compliance Information

(1) A written record was maintained in the service of the requirements detailed in points (k) of the regulation. The registered provider had ensured that all accidents and incidents were documented including any remedial action taken. The registered provider had retained records of this information being communicated with parents and guardians.

### Part IV – Information and Records

#### Regulation 18 – Copy of Act etc.

*A registered provider shall ensure that a copy of Part VIIA (inserted by section 92 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013 (No. 40 of 2013)) of the Act and of these Regulations is kept on the premises and the said copies shall be open to inspection on the premises by-*

- (a) a parent or guardian of a child attending or proposing to attend the service,*
- (b) an employee, unpaid worker or contractor, and*
- (c) an authorised person.*

### Compliance Information

(c)  
The registered provider ensured that a copy of the regulations was available in the service. This was open to inspection on the premises when requested from the person in charge by the early years inspector.

### Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

#### Regulation 19 - Health, welfare and development of child

*(1) A registered provider shall, in providing a pre-school service, ensure that-*

- (a) each child's learning, development and well-being is facilitated within the daily life of the pre-school service through the provision of the appropriate activities, interaction, materials and equipment, having regard to the age and stage of development of the child, and*
- (b) appropriate and suitable care practices are in place in the pre-school service, having regard to the number of children attending the service and the nature of their needs*

### Compliance Information

Wonder years is a large service with a total of 18 care rooms both inside and outdoors. The indoor areas are all well decorated focussing on the age and stage of development of the children occupying the room. Interest areas included in the baby room were designed considering the stage of development of the child and the focus on floor base activities including home corners, construction areas and various floor level activities. The ceiling was decorated with twinkling fairy lights and colourful material to attract the eye and assist younger babies to focus during floor play. The Little Smarties room, focussed on older babies who were able to explore the interest areas by crawling or walking. The materials and resources offered various areas of stimulation including imaginary play and sensory areas. There was ample safe space for children to learn to walk and on the day of inspection staff were observed supporting and encouraging one child to take their first steps. The child was encouraged and praised when she managed to walk from one staff member to another. Little stars, Little Scholars, Junior Einsteins, and Kreative Kids were well resourced, planned and considered from a child's perspective with materials and equipment easily accessible on low level open shelving units. Family walls in each room with pictures of the children and their families helped to keep each child reassured and connected to home.

Interest areas included home corners with child height sofas and chairs, this allowed children to participate in role play modelling home life. Children of the indoor building, including the younger age group in Tommy Toddlers and Tiny Tots, each had open access throughout the day to sensory play with natural materials, such as water, crushed cereals, spaghetti, and rice. An adult's armchair was provided in the younger age groups rooms to allow adults working with the children to sit and feed, cradle, or comfort the children.

The service promotes the benefits of outdoor play and has six outdoor rooms dedicated to the ethos of learning in the natural environments. These rooms create opportunities for curiosity to be explored, enhancing play opportunities with a mix of natural environments including trees, mud, planting, and vegetation. An array of tunnels and hills provide children with adventure and discovery where their imagination can flow. On the day of inspection, children were observed building houses out of natural materials, using the trees as shelter. Children were observed to be laughing and enjoying the adventures of hiding in tunnels and climbing trees under the supervision of staff.

The service has employed a horticulturist to the team, who ensures the outdoor areas provide new opportunities for the children to explore. As part of the curriculum, the children are involved with growing strawberries, pumpkins, sprouts and various trees and flowers, learning the lifecycle of food and how the food arrives to the plate. There is a focus on the senses, where sweet peas and edible flowers are grown in the trellis along the walkways, so during walks, children can stop, smell, and taste the beauty of nature. Inspectors observed that children were using real vegetables in home corners and mud kitchens throughout the service, creating a connection of nature to food.

There are three purpose-built bungalows with their own outdoor area in the service, which merges the indoors and outdoor environments well. The children in these rooms are younger and the indoor areas include dedicated sleep rooms. The main care room is connected to the outdoors by sliding doors, to make access to both environments seamless. Interest areas throughout include home corners, construction areas, dress up, tabletop activities, puzzles, and jigsaws. The outdoor areas provide endless opportunities for exploration, with tunnels, hills, enclosed sand boxes and a variety of bikes, trikes, and ride on toys to develop gross motor skills.

A large outdoor play area of swings, slides, see-saws are in the middle of the service, which all children have access too. On the perimeter of the service a Forrest walk is created, where children from all rooms, can go on a 'bear hunt' or find the Gruffalo'. This area is utilised daily for nature walks and play and exploration.

Children were observed happy, content and relaxed within their room environments. Staff members ensured children in their care were supported in all aspects of their physical, emotional, and social wellbeing and demonstrated warmth and affection in all interactions with the children. The staff were very respectful towards the children in their care and positive body language and gentle voice tones were used. Children were observed to be fully supported by staff members as they transitioned from their self-directed play and activities throughout the day. Settling in and transitions were made as smooth as possible within the service. One child in the Baby room had recently commenced attending the service beginning with short days, leading into longer days, this child needed additional support and comforting at times during the day which was promptly and kindly offered by the staff members, with cuddles, reassuring words and singing provided with soothing effect.

A key-worker system was in place in the service with named staff members assigned the responsibility for creating close relationships with a designated group of children and their parents. In the Little Smarties room this was evidenced through the children's journals and observations and the written communication record with families. This promoted the development and sustainment of relationships between the children, their parents, and the staff. It was clear that the service acknowledged the important role of the family and ensured there was ongoing family engagement in the service through monthly family days, where families were invited to the service to participate in various activities such as tea parties, Halloween party and science week, where the children supported by the adults could demonstrate their learnings.

The service promoted healthy eating and food and snacks were provided at regular intervals during the day. Breakfast is provided on arrival if required and consists of a choice of breakfast cereals include porridge, wheat biscuits or rice crispies. Morning snack consists of fruit and brioche, dinner on day one served to the children was potato, carrots, and fish with gravy if preferred, on day two was gammon, potato, and cabbage. Afternoon snacks included croissants, bread sticks, brioche, and a variety of fruit. All meals are prepared freshly on site and the chef follows a three-week menu plan. Young children had the opportunity to feed themselves appropriate to the age and stage of development and babies were assisted with mealtimes by staff. Children's drinks were available in the care rooms within their reach throughout the day, should they feel thirsty at any stage.

Nappy changing was carried out regularly and promptly when required and was handled in a positive and sensitive manner. Nappy changing observed in the 'baby room' and the 'little smarties room' was in line with the service policy, staff members were observed speaking to children during this time and using it as an opportunity for warm one to one interaction including singing songs and laughter. Children who could use the toilet independently were prompted to do so at various times throughout the day. The adults reminded the children of hand hygiene after use of the toilet when required.

The individual sleep needs of younger children were met, and this was observed on the days by children sleeping at various intervals in the baby room throughout the morning and afternoon. The children were supervised while sleeping including physical checks at least every ten minutes and supervised through sight and sound by a monitoring system. Older pre-school children were facilitated with a scheduled rest period in the afternoon. For children who did not require a sleep, appropriate quiet rest facilities were available in all care rooms including the outdoor rooms. Children were observed spending time in this area for short periods of rest throughout the day taking of their wellies and outer waterproof clothing and snuggling into rest areas with blankets and books. Ongoing observations and assessments were documented, which helped create a complete, well-rounded picture of each individual child. These observations informed the planning for the curriculum. The curriculum was observed to be flexible in accordance with the emerging interests of the children, their needs, and preferences. Journals reviewed across the service gave an up to date and individual picture of the child and their accomplishments. One observation of one child's learning of 'water play' included how the child concentrated and the use of hand and eye coordination in moving the water, exploring, measuring, scooping, and pouring. Activities were child led and children had the opportunity to express their views, take the lead and exercise choice in relation to their engagement in activities and in accessing play equipment throughout the day. On day two, the children in 'Tir na nog', wanted to complete an experiment and 'turn milk green'. This was to practice for a planned parent engagement session the following week, during science week. The staff member gave the children the tools required and explained the task to be completed. Children participated with enthusiasm and were delighted to see that they had the ability to change the colour of the milk and disperse colour with the use of cotton buds and washing up liquid.

The service held monthly progression meetings with staff members to review learnings over the previous months and plan for the future. The benefit of these meetings was evident in the care rooms. Staff were confident in demonstrating the learning goals and outcomes in line with the Aistear model. Staff were engaged in the individual development of the children they were supporting and promoted a child led environment, ensuring the child was listened to and directed their own curriculum.

### Part VI - Safety

#### Regulation 23 - Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child

*A registered provider shall ensure that all reasonable measures are taken to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of a pre-school child attending the service and that the environment of the service is safe.*

#### Compliance Information

##### General Safety:

- The main entrance into the service was found to be secure upon the inspectors unannounced arrival to the service, which prevented persons from entering the service without permission.
- All cleaning products in the care room were kept on high shelving out of the reach of children.
- Materials and resources were maintained in a good state of repair.
- The Kitchen was inaccessible to the children on the day of inspection.
- Highchairs were provided with harness safety straps and were observed to be in a good condition.
- Leads and flexes were secure and inaccessible to the preschool children.
- Infant formula was sent in from home premade and stored in a fridge until use. Milk was warmed using a bottle warmer.
- The use of amber beads was prohibited in the service.

##### Infection Control:

- Adequate handwashing facilities were provided in the service both indoors and outdoors with warm water, liquid soap and paper towels.
- Tables were observed to be cleaned prior and after mealtimes.
- The materials and resources were observed to be clean, and a cleaning schedule was in place in all care rooms and up to date.
- Foot operated pedal bins were in place throughout the service for the hygienic disposal of soiled tissue or totter waste.
- Sandboxes in the outdoor areas were covered and secure, ensuring no access of wildlife when not in use.
- Babies' soothers were stored in individual containers until required.

##### Administration of Medication:

- The service has a policy on the safe administration of medication. The staff in the service demonstrated their knowledge of the procedure for safe administration of medication upon interview and medications were stored safely out of the reach of children. Medication was observed to be labelled with children's names and in date.

### Safe Sleep:

- The air temperature in the sleep rooms was maintained between the required temperature of 16°C to 20°C.
- Standard cots were provided for children under two years of age and floor beds were provided for those children over two years of age.
- Rest areas were provided in all care rooms in the service including the outdoor areas to ensure children had an area to relax or opt out of an activity if they choose.

### Fire Safety:

- Fire doors throughout the building were observed to be unobstructed.
- Emergency plan notices were displayed throughout the building.

## Part VI - Safety

### Regulation 25 - First aid

*(1) A registered provider shall ensure that a person trained in first aid for children is, at all times, immediately available to the children attending the pre-school service.*

*(2) A registered provider shall ensure that a suitably equipped first aid box for children-*

*(a) is safely stored in an easily accessible and conspicuous position on the premises, and*

*(b) is available to the children attending the pre-school service at all times.*

### Compliance Information

The registered provider ensured that.

(1) at all times, there was a person trained in first aid for children immediately available to the children always attending the service.

(2) (a) (b).

The first aid equipment was readily available and safely stored in visible positions throughout the service.

## Part VI - Safety

### Regulation 27 – Supervision

*A registered provider shall ensure that pre-school children attending the service are supervised at all times.*

#### Compliance Information

Adequate adult to child ratios were in place in the service for supervision of the children on the day of the inspection. The adults supervised the children mainly by sight and positioned themselves within the room in areas where children were playing in small and larger groups. When using the toilet alone, children were within earshot of the adults if they needed assistance. At mealtimes adults remained close to the children to supervise them when they were eating.

The registered provider ensured there was adequate supervision at all times taking into consideration the required adult child ratios, the individual children's needs, the activities the children were engaged in and the staffing levels of the service.

## Part VI - Safety

### Regulation 28 - Insurance

*A registered provider shall ensure that the pre-school service is adequately insured.*

#### Compliance Information

The registered provider ensured the service had a certificate of insurance valid until the 27/03/2023 showing that adequate insurance cover was in place for the service's maximum number of 230 children.