

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015DR068
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Name of Service:	Once Upon A time Nursery & Montessori
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Address of Service:	Harbour Square, Crofton Road, Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin
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Eircode:	A96 T6N6
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Name of Registered Provider:	AnneMarie McCormack, David McCormack
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	18/02/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	76	PM	77
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	1st floor Trinity Building, IDA Business Park, Southern Cross Road, Bray, Co. Wicklow.
Inspection undertaken by:	S Quigley & O Quill
Title:	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
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Description of service

Once Upon a Time Dún Laoghaire is a privately owned service and is 1 of 11 services operated by the registered providers. The service is registered to provide full day care to children aged 1-6 years and also offers an early childhood care and education scheme. The service is registered to operate from 07:30 to 18:30 each weekday and is located in an urban area of Dún Laoghaire, South County Dublin. The service operates from a purposely built premises on the ground floor of a mixed-use apartment block and consists of six care rooms. A fully enclosed outdoor play area is available and located to the rear of the premises.

Staffing

The service currently employs 20 staff members including a designated person in charge and a staff member who carries out domestic duties. On the day of inspection, 22 adults were present including an operations manager, a training manager, an area manager, a student, and a staff member providing relief cover from another centre operated by the registered providers.

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/ safety. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

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A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 19 health, welfare and development of child. As a result, the scope of the inspection included the Wobbler 1 and 2 rooms, the Toddler 1 and 2 rooms, and the Pre-Montessori room.

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 person in charge, managers from the service's head office, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 9 – Management and recruitment

(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.*

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(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

(2)

Documentation required under regulation 9(2)(3)(4) was reviewed in respect of 17 adults who were employed in the service and who were not present when regulation 9 was last assessed on the 19 May 2025.

- (a) (b) There were two references each available for each of the adults which had been appropriately verified.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures were available for all adults working in the service. However, the service did not demonstrate compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every 3 years for one adult employed, as detailed under regulation 23.
- (d) International police vetting was available for each of the 17 adults who had lived outside the state for a period exceeding six months as an adult.

(3) Documentation reviewed evidenced that the procedures specified in paragraph (2) had been carried out prior to each of the adult commencing employment in the service.

(4)

Documentation reviewed evidenced that 6 of the adults held at least a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 on the National Qualifications Framework, or a qualification deemed to be equivalent. One adult did not require a qualification. Ten of the adults who did not hold a recognised qualification held a letter of qualification recognition from the Department of Children, Disability and Equality (DCDE).

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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.*

Compliance Information

- (1) An adequate number of adults were working directly with the pre-school children attending the service during the inspection.
- (2) The minimum ratio of adults to children was adhered to at all times during the inspection. There were 76 pre-school children attending the service being supervised by 16 adults during the inspection.

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*

Compliance Information

(1)(a)

The designated person in charge reported all meals and snacks are provided by the service each day and are prepared onsite by an employee working in a domestic role, including a hot dinner. Mealtimes were observed to be sociable and relaxed where staff sat with the children chatting, encouraging self-feeding and providing assistance where required. Younger children wore bibs to protect their clothing and staff assisted in cleaning their hands and faces following meals. Drinking water was available to the children in each of the care rooms on the day of inspection.

Staff members were observed interacting with the children in a warm and caring manner. Staff responded promptly to younger children's cues for care and displayed an awareness of the individual needs of the children they cared

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for. Older children were supported to be independent in their environment including using the toilet independently, cleaning up following mealtimes and play, and washing hands before meals and faces afterwards. Adults used gentle tones and kind, respectful language during interactions with the children who appeared content and happy in their environment during the inspection. Babies were placed to sleep throughout the day in accordance with their individual routines. Older children were provided with an opportunity to sleep after lunch and staff members stated sleep could be accommodated outside this time if required. Rest areas were available in the care rooms for children to rest or take a break from activities if required.

The care rooms were well resourced with a variety of play materials and equipment which were accessible to the children at all times during the inspection, promoting child led play. Some interest areas were defined including home corners, library's, sensory play spaces, and construction areas enabling children to engage in various forms of play and learning. Displays of children's artwork, birthday walls, picture timetables and photographs of children and their families were displayed on the walls, promoting a sense of identity and belonging in the play environments. Care rooms were equipped with suitable low-level tables and chairs in line with the developmental needs of the children in each room. The children had access to an outdoor play area to the rear of the premises.

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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

The inspectors found by observation of practice, review of documentation, discussion with staff, and inspection of the premises that the registered providers had taken the following steps to safeguard children attending:

General Safety:

The toys and play equipment observed in use by the children on the day of inspection were safe and in good working order. Cleaning products and hazardous materials were stored securely out of reach of the children. The entrances into the service were appropriately secured to prevent unauthorised access or a child exiting the service unsupervised. There were no hazards identified in the indoor or outdoor play environments.

Infection Control:

Staff stated appropriate exclusion periods for adults and children with infectious illnesses were implemented in the service as per the policy. Pedal operated bins were in place throughout the service for the disposal of waste. Staff were observed to have good hand hygiene and supported children to wash hands at appropriate times. Cleaning schedules were in place and the care rooms were observed to be clean. Staff followed infection control procedures to prevent cross contamination during nappy changing, in line with the service policy.

Administration of Medication:

There was written evidence of prior parental consent for the administration of both temperature reducing and prescribed medications, and there were procedures in place to safely administer and document such medication if required, including in the case of an emergency. Staff adequately detailed the procedures for administering medication when required during discussions with the inspectors and had appropriate documentation available to record such administration if required. Care plans were in place for children who required regular or emergency medication, and staff were familiar with these plans. A sample of the administration of medication documents reviewed contained the necessary details.

Safe Sleep:

Staff were familiar with safe sleep guidance and placed babies on their backs to sleep. Sleep logs were maintained in the dedicated sleep rooms and the younger care rooms, and individual children's observations recorded room temperature, breathing, colour, and position every ten minutes. Standard cots and low-level beds were available

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for sleep and were used in accordance with children's ages and developmental needs. The temperature of the rooms where children slept were maintained at the required temperature ranges.

Fire Safety:

The designated fire escape routes were clearly indicated and free from obstruction on the day of inspection. Staff members adequately outlined the evacuation procedures in place in the event of a fire and stated that fire drills are practiced regularly on a monthly basis.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

Although it is acknowledged Garda vetting disclosures were available for all adults employed to work in the service, the service did not demonstrate compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years for one adult employed.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

The staff member has received their renewed Garda vetting disclosure. The service recruitment manager has implemented a system to notify management of upcoming Garda vetting renewals within 2 months of the expiry date. The centre manager will also check on a quarterly basis if any staff members Garda vetting will expire.

Supporting documentation submitted

Supporting documentation was received and reviewed by the early years inspector.

Summary Comment

The regulatory requirement has been met.

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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

(1)

An adult trained in First Aid Responder (FAR) training was available to the children on the day of inspection.

(2)

(a) The first aid box was stored in a conspicuous location within the service.

(b) A first aid box was available in the service at all times on the day of inspection.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 26 - Fire safety measures

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of-

(a) any fire drill that takes place in the premises, and

(b) the number, type and maintenance record of fire fighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises.

(4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of fire shall be displayed in a conspicuous position in the premises.

Compliance Information

(1)

(a) A written record was available detailing fire drills that had taken place in the service. The record showed that the last fire drill had taken place in January 2026.

(b) There was a record to show that the firefighting equipment and the smoke alarm system had been serviced within the required timeframes.

(4)

The procedures to be followed during a fire drill and in the event of a fire were displayed in conspicuous locations within the service.