

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015DR069
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Name of Service:	Once upon a time
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Address of Service:	Wyckham Point, Wyckham way, Dundrum, Dublin 16, Co. Dublin
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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:	09/06/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	75	PM	74
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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:	Sarah Quigley & Olivia Quill
Title:	Early Years Inspector

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 Dundrum currently provides full day care to pre-school children aged 12 months to 6 years of age. Care and education are provided to children weekdays from 07:30hrs and 18:30hrs. The premises are purpose built and located at ground level within a mixed housing development in a residential area of Dundrum, South County Dublin. The facility consists of 7 care rooms, all of which were in operation on the day of inspection. Two outdoor areas are available to the children adjacent to the premises.

Staffing

The service currently employs nineteen staff members including a person in charge and an adult who carries out domestic duties. On the day of inspection, nineteen adults were present including the area manager and operations manager.

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. The inspection focused on compliance under the following regulations;

Regulation 9 – Management and recruitment

Regulation 11 - Staffing levels

Regulation 19 - Health, welfare and development of child

Regulation 23 - Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 19. As a result, the scope of the inspection included the Wobbler Room, the Pre-Montessori Room, the Toddler Room, and the Senior Wobbler 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, area manager, operations manager, 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.

(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)

Following a discussion with the operations manager, it was confirmed that ten adults had commenced working in the service since Regulation 9 was last inspected on the 25th July 2024. Documentation required under regulation 9(2)(3)(4) was reviewed in respect of these ten adults as detailed below.

(a) (b) There were two references each available for the ten adults which had been appropriately verified.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures were available for all adults working in the service. The service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) Nine of the new employees required international police vetting, the required documentation was available for the nine adults.

(3) Documentation reviewed evidenced that the procedures specified above under 9(2) had been carried out prior to the ten adults commencing employment in the service.

(4) Six of the adults held at least a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 on the National Qualifications Framework. One of the adults did not require a qualification as they were working under a work placement programme. Three of the adults who did not have a recognised qualification were in possession of a letter of qualification recognition from the Department of Children, Disability and Equality (DCDE).

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 registered provider ensured that the minimum ratio of adults to children was maintained in the service on the day of inspection. There were seventy-five children present in the service being supervised by fourteen adults during the inspection. The person in charge and the deputy person in charge provided relief cover to the care rooms when required and were rostered to do so. The operations and area manager provided support to the staff in the care rooms during the inspection but did not form part of the adult to child ratio.

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-

(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

Appropriate and suitable care practices were observed to be in place. Meals and snacks were offered to the children regularly throughout the day. Self-feeding was promoted in younger care rooms and staff assisted children where required. Staff supported the children in managing their personal care, cleaning faces and hands as required. Independence was encouraged in the care rooms and staff were observed prompting children to assist in cleaning up after meals and activities. Children's nappies were changed routinely and as needed. Staff spoke to the children in gentle, positive tones and children were comforted promptly if they became upset. Children were all given the opportunity to play outside. An area with matting and cushions was provided within the rooms where the children could rest or take a break from activities. The routine of care was observed to be child-led. Babies and younger children were provided with the opportunity to sleep at a designated time. Staff reported sleep facilities would be made available to a child outside of these designated times should they display signs of tiredness.

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 members, and inspection of the premises that the following steps were taken to safeguard children attending:

General Safety:

Steps were implemented to ensure the safety of the children. The entry and exit points were secured to prevent children from leaving the service unattended or unauthorised individuals from gaining access. The toys and play

equipment observed in use by the children on the day of inspection were safe and in good working order. Potentially hazardous materials such as cleaning products and medicines were safely stored out of children's reach. There were no hazards identified in the indoor environments.

Infection Control:

Measures were taken to minimise the risk of infection spreading. Soothers were kept in individual containers to avoid cross-contamination. Appropriate infection control measures were taken during nappy changing including the use of gloves, aprons, and thorough handwashing after changes. Each child was provided with their own bed linen, which staff stated was laundered weekly and stored individually between uses. Staff were aware of guidelines on exclusion periods for adults and children with infectious illnesses. Warm water, soap and paper towels were available for handwashing.

Administration of Medication:

Medications were stored in their original packaging out of reach of children. Staff demonstrated a clear understanding of procedures to safeguard children when administering medicine. This included ensuring written consent was obtained from parents or guardians, having a second staff member present as a witness during administration, and maintaining detailed records shared with parents or guardians upon collection. Care plans were available for children who required emergency medication and staff demonstrated a robust awareness of the requirements of these plans during discussions with the inspectors.

Safe Sleep:

Sleep logs were maintained in the dedicated sleep room and care rooms where children slept, and individual children's observations recorded room temperature, breathing, colour, and position every ten minutes. Standard cots and low-level beds were available for sleep and were used in accordance with children's ages and developmental needs.

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

Infection Control:

1. A cushion in the Wobbler Room in the children's play space was torn and had internal foam exposed which could not be effectively cleaned.
2. The pedal bin in use in one of the outdoor play areas to dispose of waste including soiled nasal tissues was broken, meaning the lid had to be handled by staff and children posing a risk of cross contamination.

Safe Sleep:

3. The temperatures of the Toddler Room and Pre-Montessori room where children aged two to three years slept on the day of inspection exceeded the required temperature range of 18 - 22°Celsius. This was at variance with the safe sleep policy in place in the service and posed a risk of harm to a child as follows;
 - At 12:10pm the temperature of the Toddler Room was recorded to be 24.4°Celsius whilst children were sleeping. The inspector informed the area manager who turned on a fan and propped up a blind at a window to allow additional air to circulate. At 12:33pm the temperature had reduced to 23°Celsius, still exceeding the required temperature range.
 - At 12:09pm the temperature of the Pre-Montessori room was recorded to be 23.7°Celsius whilst children were sleeping. Staff reported that the thermometer in use to record room temperatures had broken. The inspector informed the operations manager who turned up the fan unit in the room. The area manager brought a portable air thermometer to the care room and at 12:20pm the temperature had reduced to 23.2°Celsius, still exceeding the required temperature range. At 13:33pm the room temperature was recorded to be 24.2°Celsius.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

Infection Control:

1. The cushion was taken out from the room immediately. Staff have been retrained on the morning risk assessment which is done each morning and have been informed to remove furniture or soft toys that are not in good repair.
2. The bin was replaced on the day of inspection. The service have spare bins in the centres to replace them straight away. The service have informed all the staff about the importance of being checking this and reporting to the manager.

Safe Sleep:

3. The service hired air con units for the rooms the week before the inspection and were waiting on the delivery to arrive. They are now in place and the centres temperatures remain between regulations. The air conditioning units will be ordered earlier for the summer months and the service are currently awaiting permission from the landlord to install permanent air conditioners in the creche.

Supporting documentation submitted

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

Summary Comment

The regulatory requirement has been met.