

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier: TU2015DY300

Name of Service: Once Upon a Time

Address of Service: 25 & 26 Herbert Place (Basement), Dublin 2.

Eircode: D02 AY86

Name of Registered Provider: AnneMarie McCormack

Service type: Full Day

Date of Inspection: 29/04/2025

No of pre-school children:	AM	40	PM	40
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate: Early Years Inspectorate
2nd Floor, Unit 4/5
The Nexus Building
Blanchardstown Corporate Park
Ballycoolin
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Inspection undertaken by: C. Harte and T. Nelson

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.

Description of service

Once upon a time is a privately operated full daycare service located in Dublin 2. It is one of ten service operated by the registered provider. The service operates from 7:30am-6:30pm Monday to Friday and participates in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme. The service is located at basement level across two buildings in Herbert Place and consists of four care rooms; the Wobbler room catering for children aged 1-1.5 years, Toddler room catering for children aged 1.5-2 years, pre-Montessori room catering for children aged 2-3 years and a Montessori room catering for children aged 3-5 years, a kitchen, sanitary facilities. An enclosed outdoor play area is provided to the rear of the premises

Staffing

The registered provider employs twelve staff to work in the service including the person in charge, deputy person in charge, nine early years practitioners and domestic staff member. Ten staff were present on the day of the inspection. The registered provider also employs a management team to work across the ten services; the training and development manager and an area manager arrived in the service during the inspection and worked directly with the children in the care rooms guiding and directing the staff. The operations manager also attended the service to facilitate the inspection. The registered provider does not work directly with the children attending the service.

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 may also focus on other areas as required.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under Regulation 19 Health, Welfare and Development of child and Regulation 23 Safeguarding Health, Safety and welfare of child. As a result, the scope of the inspection included the Toddler room and 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 operations manager, training and development manager, area manager, 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) The service had a designated person in charge and a named person to deputise if required.
- (b) A review of the staff roster and discussion with management demonstrated that a designated person in charge was rostered to be on the premises the week of the inspection for the duration of the opening hours of the service. The person in charge was present in the service when the inspectors arrived.
- (c) The service had a management structure in place with clear roles and responsibilities.

- (2) A review of paperwork and discussion with management showed that there are currently 12 staff employed by the registered provider to work in the service. The files of 9 staff were reviewed as part of the inspection process, 7 of which had commenced employment since the last inspection along with a garda vetting disclosure for the operations manager who was present on the day of inspection, which had not been reviewed on the previous inspection. A review of records maintained by Tusla demonstrated that Garda vetting disclosures were dated within three years for all existing staff. The registered provider has completed the following checks:
- (a) Fifteen written and validated references were available from past employers.
 - (b) Three written and validated references were available from a source other than a past employer.
 - (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for 10 staff members. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
 - (d) Police vetting was available for 9 adults who had lived in a country other than Ireland for a period of six months or more as an adult.
- (3) Evidence was available to show that the procedures required under (2) has been completed prior to the start date of all staff members.
- (4) Evidence was available to show that nine staff members who worked directly with the children held 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.

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) There were 40 preschool children being cared for by 9 adults on the morning of the inspection. The person in charge was available to cover breaks and assist in care rooms as required.

- (2) The adult child ratios were correct when the inspectors arrived unannounced to the service and throughout the inspection. The area manager and training and development manager attended the service to facilitate the inspection and assisted with covering ratios during staff lunches.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 15 – Record of pre-school child

(1) A registered provider of a pre-school service other than a pre-school service in a drop-in centre or a temporary pre-school service shall ensure that a record in writing is kept in respect of each pre-school child attending the service containing the following particulars:

- (a) the name and date of birth of the child;*
- (b) the date on which the child first attended the service;*
- (c) the date on which the child ceased to attend the service;*
- (d) the name and address of a parent or guardian of the child and a telephone number where that parent or guardian or a relative or friend of the child can be contacted during the hours of operation of the service;*
- (e) authorisation for the collection of the child;*
- (f) details of any illness, disability, allergy or special need of the child, together with all the information relevant to the provision of special care or attention;*
- (g) the name and telephone number of the child's registered medical practitioner;*
- (h) record of immunisations, if any, received by the child;*
- (i) written parental consent for appropriate medical treatment of the child in the event of an emergency.*

Compliance Information

- (1) A sample of 15 record forms of children who currently attend the service were reviewed. These records contained all the information required under (a) to (i) above.

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

(1)(b) The following practices were observed to be in place to support the children attending:

- Mealtimes were observed to be social occasions and children were given ample time to enjoy their meal. Management advised the service uses two external companies, one for snacks and one for main meals and that all food served is supplied by the service. Morning snack on the day of inspection was crackers with cream cheese and tomatoes, the main meal was sweet potato curry with pineapple and rice. Staff were observed to react promptly to children's ques for additional portions and advised how an alternative is provided in the event a child does not like the food. The weekly menu was displayed in the hallway.
- Drinks were provided with the children's meal and children were encouraged to drink throughout their meal. Additional water was brought to the care room by domestic staff.
- Staff joined the children on the floor during play and were observed to use strategies such as labelling and repetition to encourage language development during interactions.
- Children's comfort was supported by practices such as the removal of heavy layers prior to sleep, the use of bibs during mealtimes and assistance with nasal hygiene.
- Children accessed the outdoor play area which included resources to support fundamental gross motor movement such as push and pull toys and a slide with a climbing frame.
- Nappy changing was observed to be regular and staff checked all children's nappies during preparation for sleep.

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 service entrance was secure when the inspectors arrived. A video bell was in operation allowing staff to see who is present at the door. Staff attended the door to allow access. This helps prevent unauthorised persons accessing the service.
- The flooring in the outdoor play area was level and the storage was secure.
- Cleaning agents in the Wobbler and Toddler rooms were observed to be safely stored out of reach of children.
- There were no trailing flexes observed.

Infection Control:

- Children in the Wobbler room were supported to wash their hands before snack time promoting infection control practices.
- Windows were open for ventilation allowing fresh air to circulate.
- Children were observed to use individual drink beakers.
- Cot mattresses were observed to be suitable for use with a wipeable cover.

Administration of Medication:

- Fever reducing medication was observed to be stored out of reach of children in the Wobbler room.

Safe Sleep:

- An ambient room temperature of 18-22°C was maintained in rooms where children over 1 year of age were sleeping.

Fire Safety:

- Fire evacuation routes and procedure were displayed throughout the service.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. The water in the Toddler room sanitary area was not thermostatically controlled to prevent the risk of injury. The temperature was record at 49.3°C at 11.56am, this exceeded the allowable maximum temperature of 43°C and posed a potential risk of injury and did not support effective hand washing.

2. A low ledge accessible to children in the outdoor play area was covered with padding. On the day of inspection this padding was observed to be torn and damaged with foam exposed. This posed a potential choking risk for young children if ingested. It is acknowledged that when brought to the attention of management during the inspection actions were taken to cover up the foam.

Infection Control:

3. Sections of chipped paint exposing the wall were observed in the Toddler sanitary area. This posed an infection control risk as the area could not be effectively cleaned. It is acknowledged that following the inspection and the issue being brought to the attention of management images were shared of paint applied to the area.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. Once the inspector's informed management a maintenance company was contacted to address this. A technician arrived at the centre on the day of the inspection- to address this immediately. To further prevent this from recurring mixing valves have been installed to ensure the water remains between 40-43°C to ensure effective handwashing and to further prevent any potential risks.
2. This issue was addressed immediately after it was identified by the management team. Our team filled the area and then further covered the exposed area with artificial grass. This specific item has been added to our maintenance list. We ensured that a temporary and safe solution was put in place to guarantee the safety of the children. This area has now been fully concealed, eliminating any potential risk to the children in our care. Morning checks are carried out as usual, staff are aware to check the garden area prior to garden time. Any risks or hazards identified should be reported immediately to ensure they are addressed promptly. Reporting these findings to the manager as a priority.

Infection Control:

3. Once brought to the management's attention this was addressed and painted on the day. We have since had the full room repainted. We have added to our managers daily risk assessments to check this area for chipped paint and report it to the maintenance man to repaint as a priority.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

- Photographic evidence.

Infection Control:

- Photographic evidence.

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventative actions provided by the registered provider are sufficient to address the non-compliances under Regulation 23.

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) A review of the staff roster indicated that a person qualified in First Aid Responder (FAR) was rostered to be on the premises during the operational hours of the service for the week of the inspection.

(2) (a)(b) An adequately equipped first aid box was available and easily accessible to staff if required and was stored out of reach of children.

Part VIII - Notifications and Complaints

Regulation 32 – Complaints

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that the complaints policy of the service specifies-

(a) the procedure to be followed by a person for the purposes of making a complaint in relation to the service,

(b) the manner in which such a complaint shall be dealt with, and

(c) the procedures for keeping a person who makes such a complaint informed of the manner in which it is being dealt with.

(2) A registered provider shall ensure that-

(a) a record in writing is kept of a complaint made to the provider in respect of the pre-school service, and

(b) the complaint is duly dealt with in accordance with the provider's complaints policy.

Compliance Information

The registered provider ensured the following:

- (1) There was a complaints policy maintained that outlined the following:
 - (a) The procedure to be followed when making a complaint.
 - (b) The way complaints would be dealt with.
 - (c) The procedures for keeping the complainant informed on how the complaint is being dealt with.
- (2)
 - (a) The registered provider ensured there was a process in place to record complaints.
 - (b) This was maintained in line with the service policy.