

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015GY152
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Name of Service:	Little Wonders Creche & Montessori
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Address of Service:	Eden Lodge, Clybaun Road, Knocknacarra, Co. Galway
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Eircode:	H91 XA39
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Name of Registered Provider:	Monica Keenan
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Service type:	Full Day
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Date of Inspection:	21/07/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	20	PM	16
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Quality Assurance Directorate, Children & Family Agency, H.R Building, Merlin Park, Galway.
Inspection undertaken by:	E. Friel
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

Little Wonders Creche and Montessori offers early years care and education to children on a full time, part-time and sessional basis. While registered to accommodate children from 1 to 6 years of age the service currently facilitates children from 2 to 6 years of age. Opening hours are from 08:00 until 18:00, 51 weeks of the year. The Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme operates within these hours from 09:00 until 12:00 and is available for 38 weeks of the year. A school age service is available in the afternoon from 13:30 until 18:00. The secure outdoor play areas are located at the rear and side of the service. Car parking is available at the front of the building.

The service is located in the urban area of Knocknacarra in Galway city. It operates from a single storey, purpose built childcare facility adjacent to the registered provider's home. There were 3 care rooms 1 of which was in use on the day of inspection. Adult and children's sanitary facilities were available, along with a kitchen and a designated sleep room.

Staffing

The service currently employs 11 adults, 9 of whom were working on the day of inspection including the registered provider, an administrator and 2 school age care staff.

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.

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 inspector wishes 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.

(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.

(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 registered provider was the designated person in charge and there was a named person available to deputise in the service as required.
- (b) The person in charge was on the premises when the early years inspector arrived and remained on site for the duration of the inspection. The registered provider assisted with the administrative requirements of the inspection, acted as childcare relief in the care rooms and cooked the hot food served during the day. Documentary evidence in the form of a staff roster indicated that either the designated person in charge or deputy were available, on the premises, when early years children were present.

(2) Recruitment files for all 11 adults were reviewed:

- (a) Eighteen of the required 22 written and validated references were available on file from a past employer.
- (b) The remaining 4 written and validated references were from a source other than a past employer.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures were available in respect of the 11 adults working in the service, demonstrating compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every 3 years.
- (d) Police vetting disclosures were available for 6 of 9 adults that had lived outside the jurisdiction, for longer than 6 consecutive months, while over the age of 18 years.
- (4) There was evidence that 5 of 9 adults who required a childcare qualification had attained major awards in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 or above on the National Framework of Qualifications, or qualifications deemed to be equivalent. Four of the remaining 9 adults that did not have the required qualification had letters of eligibility to practice from the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth.

Non-Compliance Information

- (2)
- (d) Three overseas police vetting disclosures were missing in respect of 3 adults that had lived outside the jurisdiction, for longer than 6 consecutive months, while over the age of 18 years.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The following statement was received from the registered provider:

- (2)
- (d) One of the 3 adults is no longer working in the service. Overseas police vetting is now on file for the 2 remaining adults. In future, all required documentation will be on file before the employee commences employment.

Supporting documentation submitted

The following documentation was received in the office of the inspectorate.

- (2)
- (d) Copies of the 2 overseas police vetting disclosures for the 2 adults for whom they were required. The statement from the registered provider regarding the third adult has been accepted.

Summary Comment

The evidence submitted by the registered provider has addressed the non-compliances identified under Regulation (9) (2) (d).

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.*
- (8) Without prejudice to paragraphs (2) to (7)-*
- (a) a registered provider of a pre-school service other than a child-minding service or a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that there are at least 2 adults on the premises at all times.*

Compliance Information

- (1) The registered provider ensured that there were an adequate number of adults working directly with the children at all times.
- (2) The adult/child ratios were met.
- There were 6 adults working directly with 20 early years children in the morning and 6 adults working directly with 16 early years children in the afternoon.
- (8)
- (a) The staff roster indicated that the designated person in charge and a named person were on the premises while the early years children were present.

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

Basic needs:

- Menu plans, presented to the inspector, evidenced that there was a wide variety of healthy and nutritious food being served over a 3-week period. Hot food provided by the service and the snacks provided by both the service and the parents/guardians were served regularly throughout the day. Staff stated that breakfast of oat and wheat-based cereals are available each morning and children attending full day care were offered at least two meals and two snacks.
- Morning snack in the Pre-ECCE room was observed at 10:35 with children enjoying avocado, filled sandwiches, waffles and watermelon. Hot meals were served at 12:40 and 15:00 and consisted of Korma and vegetables with rice and pasta with a tomato sauce.
- Children were noted to be given adequate time to eat without being rushed and those who requested additional food were given a second serving.
- All food served was observed to be age and stage appropriate; a staff member in the Pre-ECCE room was observed removing whole apples and cutting them into smaller bite sized pieces.
- Water, which was easily accessible to the children, was observed to be available from individual water bottles in the care rooms.
- Nappy changing was carried out regularly and as required and was handled in a positive and sensitive manner.
- Spare clothes were available in the event of an accident and these were labelled and stored in boxes.
- Handwashing was observed before the serving of food and when the children were returning from outdoor play.
- Staff were observed assisting children with putting on light jackets for outdoor play as the weather was changeable on the day of inspection.

- Areas with soft furnishings, where the children could sit away from noisy activities, were observed in each room. Two children who required sleep at lunch time were facilitated on stackable beds, with individual bed linen, in a small sleep room off the Pre-ECCE/Toddler care room.

Physical and material environment:

- Each of the care rooms was laid out in clearly defined areas which provided play opportunities to enhance the learning needs of the children across all developmental areas.
- A poster of basic rules on the wall of the Pre-ECCE area reminded children to use kind hands, good listening and kind words.
- The outdoor play area provided alternative changes of environments for the age and development of the children attending the service. A range of developmentally appropriate equipment and resources was provided in the fully enclosed play areas which provided opportunities for gross motor development- tricycles, ride-ons, tractors and cars. Sensory materials such as water provided opportunities for sensory exploration, creative expression, language skills and emotional regulation.

Supporting children's relationships:

- Staff in the outdoor play area were observed supporting children to engage positively with one another and the children were encouraged to engage in play activities what required turn taking and sharing. An example included children being supervised one at a time by an adult while balancing and walking over 6 tyres.
- Children were encouraged and supported to tidy up after activities promoting independence and a sense of responsibility.
- Staff stated communication with parents/guardians takes place at drop off and collection. The inspector noted management passing on information to staff which had been received on texts from parents/guardians and management stated notes were issued on important dates to remember.
- Staff stated informal meetings take place daily with topics including planning of activities, issues, children and training required.

Programme of Activities:

- Learning journals were available of children in the Pre-ECCE area. These detailed the short, medium and long-term activities which the children participated in throughout the year which were linked to both the

national curriculum and quality frameworks. Examples of themes included- Fire safety, Halloween, my family, feelings and emotions, weather and the human body

- Children were facilitated to make their own choice in selecting play equipment and activities that they wished to engage in. Throughout the day the inspector observed children who chose not to go outdoors being facilitated in the Toddler area with their chosen activities.
- Language development was supported through one to one, group discussion and storytelling which were observed during the inspection. Examples included a staff member in the Pre-ECCE area interacting with the group while displaying a book with phonic letters and corresponding examples. Staff members in the Toddler area were observed sitting on the floor of the quiet area discussing the names of dinosaurs located in a box with a child who had chosen to remain indoors.

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:

- All doors were appropriately secured to prevent children from leaving the service unsupervised and prevent unauthorised adults entering the service.
- Windows in the Pre-ECCE room were fitted with restrictors preventing children from falling or exiting from them.
- Ramps in the outdoor play area were fitted with handrails facilitating children walking safely to the care room.
- All toys in the indoor and outdoor play areas appeared in good condition and were well maintained.
- All waste in the indoor and outdoor areas was inaccessible to the children. Bins in the outdoor area were secured out of reach of the children.
- Cleaning agents in the sanitary and care rooms were stored out of reach of the children.
- The outdoor play areas were secured with a high concrete wall, high hedging and metal fencing. The younger and older children's play areas were separated with high metal gates with sliding bolts placed out of reach of the children. The main surface of both play areas was covered in safety matting providing impact absorption helping to reduce injuries from falls.

Infection Control:

- Hand basins in use in the care rooms and sanitary areas, by the adults and children, were fitted with thermostatically controlled hot water, between 37°C and 43°C, dispensing soap and paper towels. Pedal operated bins were available for the disposal of paper waste.
- Child friendly posters of handwashing and toileting were displayed in the children’s sanitary areas which demonstrated the steps for hygienic hand washing and toileting.
- Children’s bags in the Pre-ECCE care room were stored in a box, away from the floor area.
- Staff in the care rooms were observed sanitising tables before and after the serving of food and sweeping the floor ensuring the areas were kept clean and hygienic.
- Sky lights and windows in the care rooms were open providing fresh air.

Administration of Medication:

- Temperature reducing medications, stored in original containers, placed out of reach of the children, were available in the event of an emergency.

Safe Sleep:

- The inspector observed that physical sleep checks were being carried out every 10 minutes as per requirements to ensure the safety of the children.
- Children’s stackable beds were placed 50 centimetres apart.
- The temperature of the sleep room, 21.1°C, was between the recommended limits of 18 °C and 22°C for children aged over 12 months of age.

Fire Safety:

- All fire doors were unobstructed and fitted with thumb twist cylinders facilitating the timely evacuation of children and adults in the event of an emergency.
- Fire assembly points in the car park and in the outdoor play area were clearly visible.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. Circular tabletops in use in the both the Pre-ECCE and Toddler care areas had patches of uneven fiberboard missing, posing a safety risk to the children.

Infection Control:

2. Nappy changing procedures were inadequate to control the spread of infection. An adult from the Toddler area did not follow the nappy changing procedure in use in the service. In discussion with the inspector the staff member was unaware of the requirement to use a disposable apron for each soiled nappy change and that children's hands should be washed after nappy changing. Examples observed during inspection:
 - Disposable gloves were not worn at all times when required for personal care of a child while nappy changing.
 - The staff member returned a used apron to the clean apron bag.
 - The inspector observed that the staff member did not wash children's hands following nappy changing. It was acknowledged that this was addressed following a discussion with the staff member.
3. The corners of 3 vinyl mats were in a poor state of repair. The corners of the mats were worn making effective cleaning difficult.
4. A sofa in use in the Pre-ECCE had a patch of vinyl material missing making it difficult to clean.

Safe Sleep:

5. Sleep records furnished to the inspector of 2 children sleeping did not contain all the relevant information required, compromising the safety of the children. The inspector observed that the children's sleep room records were missing the temperatures of the sleep room during 10-minute checks. In addition, the sleep records were pre-populated with ten-minute time slots.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

The following statements were received from the registered provider;

General Safety:

1. The circular tables in the Pre-ECCE and Toddler care areas have been replaced. All staff have been asked to report any wear and tear of furniture which will be removed, replaced or repaired.

Infection Control:

2. Staff responsible for nappy changing have been retrained to ensure compliance with the service nappy changing policy and to prevent the spread of infection. The manager will conduct nappy changing checks to ensure the nappy changing policy is being followed.
3. The floor mats have been removed and new floor mats have been ordered.
4. The sofa has been removed from the Pre-ECCE care room.

Safe Sleep:

5. The 10-minute physical sleep checks have been revised to include the temperature of the sleep room and the pre-populated time slots have been removed.

Supporting documentation submitted

The following photographs, receipts and documentation were received in the office of the inspectorate;

General Safety:

1. Photographs of the new circular tables in the Pre-ECCE and Toddler care rooms.

Infection Control:

2. The statement from the registered provider has been accepted.

3. A receipt for the 4 new floor mats.

4. The statement from the registered provider has been accepted.

Safe Sleep:

5. A copy of the revised sleep check with a temperature column added and the 10-minute pre-populated time slots removed was received in the office of the inspectorate.

Summary Comment

The actions taken by the registered provider has addressed the non-compliances identified 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) Certificates were available to evidence that three adults had completed First Aid Responder (FAR) training. The staff roster confirmed that a person trained in first aid was available while the early years children were present in the service.

(2)

(a) The first box, stored in the kitchen, was easily and within easy reach of the adults. It was available while the early years children were on the premises.

Non-Compliance Information

(2)

(b) The inspector observed that the following items had expired:

- A box of 8cm x 6 cm wound dressings expiry date 02/2022
- Two boxes of 5 cm x 5 cm wound dressings with expiry dates of 06/2022 and 06/2024
- A box of 10 cm x 10 cm wound dressings and an eye pad with an expiry date of 05/2024.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The following statement was received from the registered provider;

(2)

(b) All expired items have been replaced. A quarterly check will be carried out to ensure the first aid boxes are well stocked and all used items will be replaced.

Supporting documentation submitted

(2)

(b) Photographs of the replaced items with expiry dates visible and dated 2027 and 2028 were received in the office of the inspectorate.

Summary Comment

The actions taken by the registered provider has addressed the non-compliance identified under Regulation 25 (2) (b).

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.

(2) The record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection by-

- (c) an authorised person.

(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) Written records of monthly fire drills were available in the service. The last fire drill recorded was dated 13 June 2025.
- (b) Written records were available recording the number, type and maintenance records of the firefighting equipment and the smoke alarms. The firefighting equipment documentation was recorded as 4 February 2025 and smoke alarm certificate was recorded as May 2025.
- (2)
- (c) All records referred to in paragraph (1) were available to review by the inspector on the premises.
- (4) The fire drill routines were located on the doors of the care rooms and sanitary areas.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The registered provider furnished evidence that the service was insured. The insurance certificate stated that the service was insured for 50 children on a full day care basis. The expiry date was recorded as 27 March 2026. In addition, the motor policy expiry date was recorded as 30 August 2026.