

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015SO046		
Name of Service:	Once Upon a Time Montessori		
Address of Service:	Attyduff, Ballinfull, Co. Sligo		
Eircode:	F91 YN9V		
Name of Registered Provider:	Georgina Leonard		
Service type:	Full Day, Sessional		
Date(s) of Inspection:	06/06/2023		
No of pre-school children:	AM	24	PM 10
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, TUSLA Child & Family Agency, Markievicz House, Barrack St, Sligo, F91 XC84		
Inspection undertaken by:	L Costello and Y. Coyne		
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 is a privately run full day care service. The service is located a few kilometres from the village of Grange in North County Sligo. The service is registered for 50 pre-school children as per the Early Years register, ranging from 1 to 6 years of age. Once upon a time provides sessional and full day care for preschool children. The service also provides a school aged service. The service operates from 08:00 to 18:00 hours. The service operates from an adapted dormer bungalow in the dwelling house of the registered provider. There are three rooms available to the preschool children. Two rooms on the ground floor for senior preschool children. On the first floor is the junior preschool room and sanitary accommodation including nappy changing room and a staff toilet. The service also has a large outdoor area adjacent to the dwelling.

Staffing

The service employs four people directly working with pre-school children. This includes the registered provider and relief 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, safety and premises. The inspections may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9, 11, 19, 23, 26 and 29.

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.

(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

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(a) The registered provider was the designated person in charge and a named person was available to deputise as required.

(b) The person in charge or a designated person is on the premises at all times when the pre-school is in operation.

(c) There is a clear management structure within the service and staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities.

2.

Four files were available in respect of the registered provider and three members of staff. The four files were reviewed by the inspector.

(a) Eight references from past employers were available. Six of these were dated and validated.

(b) Not applicable, as all reference available were from past employers.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures were available in respect of the registered provider and three staff members.

(d) Not applicable, as the staff members working in the service had not lived outside of Ireland as an adult for a period longer than six consecutive months.

4.

The Registered Provider and the three staff members held Early Childhood Care and Education qualifications ranging from level 5 to level 7 on the National framework of Qualifications., or a qualification deemed by the minister to be equivalent.

Non-Compliance Information

2 (a) Two references for one staff member were not dated by the employer, making it difficult to ascertain when the reference was received and validated.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The registered provider has reviewed references and has made assurances that dates are recorded going forward.

Supporting documentation submitted

Documentary evidence submitted.

Summary Comment

The written response and documentary evidence submitted by the registered provider has been reviewed by the early year's inspectorate. The regulatory requirement for regulation 9 has been met at this time and will be reviewed at the time of the next inspection.

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.

(4) Subject to paragraph (5), where a registered provider contemporaneously provides-

(a) a sessional pre-school service, and

(b) a full day care service or a part-time day care service, or both, the minimum ratio of adults to children applicable for the duration of the sessional pre-school service in respect of the children attending that service shall be the ratio specified in paragraph (3).

Compliance Information

(1) On the day of inspection, an adequate number of adults worked directly with the children attending the service at all times.

(4) (a) The adult child ratios were maintained at all times.

(b) Three adults supervised 24 children during the sessional programme and three adults supervised 10 children in the afternoon.

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

Children were observed to be 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. Staff were observed to demonstrate warmth and affection in all interactions with the children.

The staff were very respectful towards the children in their care and children were spoke to in a kind respectful manner. First names were used, appropriate eye contact and gentle voice tones were observed being used in all interactions.

There was a happy atmosphere in the service as demonstrated by children laughing and joking with their peers and staff. Children enjoyed the play activities in the pre-school rooms including circle time, tabletop activities and outdoor play. Low level table and chairs were noted in the three pre-school rooms. Materials were accessible to children on low level shelving and included building blocks, jigsaws, farm animals, dolls, cars and arts and crafts. Interest areas were provided in the form of a home corner, dolls house and construction area for children's use. Children were observed self-directing their own play, freely moving from one area to the other.

The outdoor area was located across the courtyard this area provided opportunities for development of gross motor skills with various trikes and balance bikes. This area was equipped with playhouses, mud kitchen and slides. The children guided the program of care and education in both the indoor play rooms and the outdoor area.

Parents provided the lunches for children in the service. Lunches consisted of sandwiches, fruits, crackers, cheese and yoghurts. Perishable goods were stored in the service fridge on arrival in the morning. For those children staying on for full day care, dinners were sent in from home in an airtight container. Dinners are stored in the fridge on arrival to the service. As required dinners are reheated using the microwave and probed for correct temperature. On the day of inspection children's dinners consisted of pasta and salads. Parents are informed of the service healthy eating policy on enrolment to the service.

On the day of inspection all children in attendance were aged over two years. Low level beds are available if required for nap times. Staff informed inspectors that at present some of the children are transitioning out of nap times, however staff do respond to signs of tiredness by providing nap time as required.

The service provided information to parents on the children's curriculum. The children's learning and development was recorded in a weekly newsletter that was sent home to the families. This newsletter provided up to date information on the opportunities provided and the learning journey for the children attending the service.

Non-Compliance Information

1. Rest areas with soft seating were not provided in the preschool rooms for children to relax/sit down or have some quiet time. It is acknowledged that at the closing meeting, the registered provider did inform inspectors that soft furnishings and bean bags were removed due to COVID.
2. Individual learning journals were not available in the service to demonstrate and evidence the curriculum being provided.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

After the inspection the registered provider submitted evidence that the rest areas in the preschool rooms were reintroduced and will remain in use.

The individual learning journals had been removed to complete work for graduation. The registered provider has made assurances that journals will not be removed from the service in the future.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographs and documentary evidence.

Summary Comment

The evidence and the corrective and preventive actions submitted for the non-compliances found upon inspection in relation to regulation 19 have been reviewed by the inspector and regulatory compliance has now been achieved.

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 door into the service was found to be secured upon the inspectors unannounced arrival to the service, which prevented persons from entering the service without authorization and children from leaving the building.
- Cleaning products in use in the playrooms were stored out of the reach of children.
- Toys and play equipment available in playrooms were satisfactory and appropriate for the age and stage of the children using them.
- Materials and resources were maintained in a good state of repair.
- The children were observed to be supervised by adults when using the stairs between the playrooms.
- In the first floor play room a secure gate ensured that the stairs were not accessible to the pre-school children unsupervised.
- The outdoor area consisted of stable safe toys with no sharp edges.
- Children were supervised when crossing the courtyard to the outdoor play area.

Infection Control:

- Personal protective equipment was available for nappy changing procedures.
- Warm water, paper towels and liquid soap were provided at the wash basins with age-appropriate signs and pictures to prompt children to wash their hands effectively.
- Surfaces such as tabletops were cleaned by staff following use.

Safe Sleep:

- Low level beds are available should a child wish to have nap.

Fire Safety:

- Fire exits were clear of obstruction.
- An external stairwell was accessible for safe evacuation from the first floor playroom.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. The outdoor area used by children attending the service was not secure. There is a gap in the fencing, which a child may climb out and access the main road. This poses a risk of safety to the child.
2. The outdoor play area is across the courtyard from the preschool. On the day of inspection, staff were using two chairs to close of the path to the preschool. This is not a secure mechanism to secure the pathway.
3. The windows in the service did not have restrictors in place as advised by the fire department. In the ground floor preschool, furniture was placed directly under the window, which was a potential hazard as a child may use this furniture to climb up and out the window posing a risk of harm to the child.

Infection Control:

4. There was no bin for disposing nappies in the nappy changing area in the junior preschool. This was in contradiction to the service policy. Staff were using the sanagenic bin in the bathroom across the hall. The guidelines advise that nappies should be disposed of in a foot operated, lined, lidded bin that is leak proof, sealable and easy to clean.
5. The waste bins provided in the children's toilets were not foot operated or lidded as required. This poses a risk of infection to the child.
6. The cleaning schedule displayed did not appear to have being updated as no dates were recorded.
7. There were substantial amounts of items stored in the nappy changing area which posed a risk of cross contamination.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. The gap in the fencing has now been fixed and the registered provider will ensure the perimeter is secure.
2. A retractable gate has been installed to secure the outdoor play area.
3. All furniture has been moved away from windows to prevent the risk of any child climbing out the windows. The registered provider has assured that furniture will not be placed directly under windows.

Infection Control:

4. . A foot operated pedal bin is now in operation in the nappy changing area for safe disposal of nappies.
5. The waste bins provided in the children's sanitary area are now foot operated and lidded.
6. The cleaning schedule has been updated with staff members informed of their responsibility in completing same.

7. The nappy changing area has been cleared of storage. The registered provider has assured that the nappy changing area will not be used for storage in the future.

Fire Safety:

8. The fire book has been updated and will be used alongside the enrolment book going forward to document fire drills.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

Photographs submitted

Infection Control:

Photographs submitted

Fire Safety:

Photographs and documentary evidence submitted.

Summary Comment

The evidence and the corrective and preventive actions submitted for the non-compliances found upon inspection in relation to regulation 23 have been reviewed by the inspector and regulatory compliance has been achieved.

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-
- (a) a parent or guardian of a pre-school child attending or proposing to attend the pre-school service,
 - (b) an employee, and
 - (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) A record of fire drills was in place in the service.
(b) The record of the last service date for the fire equipment was recorded as 23/08/2022 in line with the required annual service.
- 2 (c) This record was available for inspection by an authorised person.
4. A notice of the fire evacuation procedures was displayed in a conspicuous position within the service.

Non-Compliance Information

1. (a) Fire drills were recorded as having taking place in February and April, however no date was recorded. This is in contradiction to required monthly fire drills.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

- (1) (a) The fire drills will be completed monthly in line with the service policy.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographs and documentary evidence.

Summary Comment

The evidence and the corrective and preventative actions submitted for the non-compliances found upon inspection in relation to regulation 26 have been reviewed by the inspector and regulatory compliance has been achieved.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-

- (a) of sound and stable structure,*
- (b) safe and secure,*
- (c) kept adequately lit, heated and ventilated*
- (d) cleaned, maintained and repaired, as required, and*
- (e) equipped with adequate and suitable sanitary facilities.*

Compliance Information

- (a) The service exterior walls appear to be structurally sound and weather tight, ensuring protection from the weather. Windows opened and closed with ease. There was no evidence of mould on interior walls.
- (b) The preschool service was safe and secure, the locked entrance door protected the pre-school from unauthorised entry to the service and unsupervised exit.
- (c) On the day of inspection, the service was observed to be adequately lit, heated and ventilated. Fresh air circulated in rooms occupied by children. When the children transitioned to the outdoor play areas, doors were opened to ensure adequate ventilation and to reduce the temperature.
- (d) The service appeared clean with supply of cleaning equipment made available to staff. Surfaces were cleaned after use, for example mealtimes and arts and crafts. Staff informed inspectors of the cleaning schedule of equipment and soft furnishings.
- (e) The service provided adequate sanitary facilities for the children using the service. Sanitary accommodation was clean and in good working order. Wash hand basins provided hot and cold running water not exceeding 43°C. A supply of liquid soap and paper towels were available for hygienic hand washing. The service had three nappy changing areas; one was in use on the day of inspection. This area had Individual storage containers for children’s nappies and wipes. Cleaning equipment and appropriate PPE was also available.

Non-Compliance Information

(D). On the day of the inspection the outside waste bins were accessible to children crossing the courtyard. This poses a risk of safety to the pre-school children. It is acknowledged that at the feedback meeting the registered provider informed inspectors, that as it was bin day the waste bins were left in the drive.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The registered provider has assured that bins will remain in the designated area away from direct access of children.

Supporting documentation submitted

Designated area observed on day of inspection.

Summary Comment

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The evidence and the corrective and preventative actions submitted for the non-compliances found upon inspection in relation to regulation 29 have been reviewed by the inspector and regulatory compliance has been achieved.