

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015TY160
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Name of Service:	Wonder Years Playschool
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Address of Service:	St. Peter & Pauls National School, Kickham St, Clonmel, Co Tipperary
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Eircode:	E91 NF43
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Name of Registered Provider:	Patricia Whelan
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Service type:	Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	05/12/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	13	PM	4
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	13 Market Square, Mallow, Co Cork.
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Inspection undertaken by:	B Fraher
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Title:	Early Years Inspector
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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	N/A
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Description of service

Wonder Years Playschool is a registered privately owned early years service located in a classroom on the ground floor of St Peter and Paul's National School. The service is registered to cater for children from 2-6 years offering a part time and sessional service. The Early childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme runs from 8:50 to 11:50 and the part time hours are 8:50 to 13:50. There is a registered school age service in operation in the afternoon. The children's toilet facilities are directly off the care room and the adult toilet facilities are located within the national school.

Staffing

There were four staff attached to the service and a total of three staff were working directly with the children on the day of inspection including the registered provider.

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 children, registered provider and staff 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

- (1)
- (a) The service had a designated person in charge on the day of inspection and a named deputy in the service that could deputise as required.
- (b) The registered provider was on duty at the service when the inspector arrived. The staff roster indicated that either the registered provider or the deputy was on duty at all times during the hours of operation.
- (c) There was clear evidence on inspection of the management structure in place and the specific roles of each staff member. This was on display on the notice board.
- (2) The recruitment records in relation to four adults, three of whom were employed in the service and the registered provider were the subject of inspection.
- (a) Of the eight required references, one was from previous employers with required record of validation on file.
- (b) Of the eight required references, five were from a source other than a past employer with required records of validation on file.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures were obtained and were on file for the four staff. 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 required and available for one of the four adults as they lived outside of the state for longer than six consecutive months.
- (4) The four adults who worked directly with the children held a relevant qualification in Early Childhood Care and Education from level 5 to level 6 on the National Framework of Qualifications.

Non-Compliance Information

- (9) (2) (a) (b) Two references and two validations were not available for one staff member. References and validations are required prior to their commencement of employment to ensure that all employees are suitable to work in an early years service.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The following statement was received from the registered provider:

Corrective and Preventive Action

Two references have been obtained and validated. All new employees will have references obtained and validated prior to the commencement of employment.

Supporting documentation submitted

Two references and validations received.

Summary Comment

The corrective action submitted by the registered provider has addressed the non-compliance identified under Regulation (2) (a) (b).

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 10 - Policies, procedures etc. of pre-school service

A registered provider of a pre-school service shall ensure that the written policies, procedures and statements specified in Schedule 5 are in place for the service.

Non-Compliance Information

The following policies did not meet the regulatory requirements:

1. The infection control policy did not outline the following:

- Management of perishable foods.

2. The healthy eating policy did not outline the following:

- How food is safely stored and served.

Therefore, the above policies and procedures may not adequately guide the staff in their care practices.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The following statement was received from the registered provider:

Corrective and Preventive Action

1. The infection control policy now outlines the management of perishable foods. Policies will be reviewed on a yearly basis.

2. The healthy eating policy now outlines how food is safely stored and served. Policies will be reviewed on a yearly basis.

Supporting documentation submitted

1. Updated policy.

2. Updated policy.

Summary Comment

The corrective action submitted by the registered provider has addressed the non-compliances identified under Regulation 10.

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) At the time of inspection, there were the adequate number of adults required, responsible for the direct care and supervision of the children in attendance at all times.

(2) The service exceeded the minimum ratio required as per regulation in the care room. The 13 children attending the service in the morning were supervised directly by 4 adults and the 4 children attending in the afternoon were supervised directly by 2 adults.

(8)

(a) The service operated with at least two adults present at all times. This was observed on the day of inspection and was evident through examination of the roster.

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,

Compliance Information

Basic needs:

- All snacks had been prepared by the parents and were observed to be healthy and nutritious. Children were observed to eat cold meat, fruit, rice cakes, sandwiches and waffles for snack time. The service has alternative food available if required.
- The staff were observed helping and assisting the children where necessary at snack time.
- Drinking water was accessible to the children throughout the inspection.
- The location of the sanitary facilities allowed children independent access, as needed. Staff were observed to manage toileting in a sensitive manner, for example, through offering assistance to the children when needed.
- Children had the opportunity to rest or relax with soft seating in the form of child size vinyl sofas. Age and stage appropriate books were positioned nearby on a book rack.
- The care room afforded children adequate space to move freely and to engage in a range of activities. Active play and movement was facilitated in the indoor environment, due to the bad weather on the day.
- Appropriate seating was used in the form of low-level tables and chairs.
- Self-help skills were encouraged by the adults who praised each child's efforts. Examples included children, bringing their snack from their bags and returning it to their bags for home and cleaning their own noses.
- Children were observed washing their hands before snack time and after using the toilet.
- Accessible low-level open shelving ensured children could choose the materials and equipment they wished to play with. A wide variety of puzzles, jigsaws, and peg boards offered opportunities for fine motor play and cognitive development. Construction materials such as blocks and vehicles provided opportunity to role play and develop hand eye coordination.

Supporting relationships:

- The inspector observed positive and playful interactions between the staff and children. For example, the staff sat at the table at the children's level and were building blocks, completing artwork and engaging in imaginative play with the children.
- Many children demonstrated a sense of pride in their success following art and building towers and were observed calling on the staff members to share their achievements. The staff members readily acknowledged and encouraged the children's efforts and accomplishments.
- Staff members were observed to engage attentively with children. They were involved in play with children in small groups or individually, engaged in conversation and listened attentively to the children as they spoke.
- During mealtimes, the adult remained with the children and assisted as required. The children were afforded sufficient time to enjoy the food in a relaxed atmosphere and adults conversed with children at the tables.
- The children were encouraged to tidy up after completing tasks, which promoted a sense of responsibility.
- The registered provider informed the inspector that parent and guardian communication during collection and drop off periods, provided an opportunity for staff to share information with parents and individual meetings are offered to parents if they wish. The service also used a messaging application to share information and email the service policies to the parents. Special events were celebrated between home and preschool, such as celebrating a birthday. A cake was supplied by parents and a celebration was held in the preschool yesterday.
- Staff stated that meetings with management occur on a three- monthly basis. The last meeting recorded was on 28 November 2025.

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 windows in the care rooms were adequately secured to ensure the safety of the children.
- Cleaning agents were stored out of reach of the children.
- The toys and play equipment assessed were in good condition.

- The outdoor area was a safe and secure space for the children with metal railing, concrete walls and a gate that was closed when children were outdoors. This prevented children gaining unsupervised access to an unsafe area during outdoor play.
- The equipment used in the outdoor area was in good condition and was able to be stored under a roofed area or in a shed when not in use.
- There were no cables or trailing flexes accessible to the children on the day of inspection.

Infection control:

- Handwashing facilities were accessible to the children with warm running water, liquid soap and paper towels.
- Children were observed to wash their hands before meals and after using the sanitary facilities.
- Lidded pedal bins were in use for the disposal of waste in the sanitary area and the care room.
- Children's coats and bags were stored off the ground on hooks.
- Tissues were available and placed at the children's height helping to prevent the spread of infection.

Administration of medication:

- The inspector did not observe the administration of medication on the day of inspection as no child was prescribed medication. Staff informed the inspector that consent for administration of temperature reducing medication had been obtained on the enrolment form and two staff signed for this after parental consent was gained.

Safe sleep:

- The service planned to use an area of the care room for sleep if required and four stackable beds were available for use. The air temperature of the care room was recorded at 18.0°C. The registered provider informed the inspector that no child availed of sleep in the last year and that in the event of sleep, records were available to record the children's colour, breathing and position at 10-minute intervals.

Fire safety:

- Fire exits were noted to be free from obstruction.
- Fire extinguishers were secured to the walls.

Non-Compliance Information

General safety:

1. The inspector noted a fire exit door, located in the children's sanitary facilities had a push bar opening mechanism at a child's height. On opening, this door led out to a school yard with an open gate with access to the road. This posed a risk of unsupervised exit of a child.

Infection control:

2. On the day of inspection, children's perishable snacks were observed to be stored in their bags on hooks on the wall. A refrigerator was available in the care room but was not in use by the children on the day. This posed a risk of food spoilage.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The following statement was received from the registered provider:

General safety:

1. An alarm was installed on the fire door. The staff will be alerted if this door is opened.

Infection control:

2. Children's perishable foods are now stored in the refrigerator. The policy is also updated to state this.

Supporting documentation submitted

General safety:

1. Photo of the alarm installed.

Infection control:

2. The statement from the registered provider is accepted.

Summary Comment

The actions taken by the registered provider have 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)
Up to date records of First Aid Response (FAR) certification were in place for two of the adults working in the service.

(2)
(a) There was one sufficiently stocked first aid box available in the service, which was safely stored out of reach of children.

(b) The first aid supplies were always accessible, should they be required.

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)

(b) Written records were available of the servicing of the firefighting equipment and the smoke alarms. The firefighting certificate was dated 24 February 2025, and the smoke alarm certificate was dated 17 July 2025.

(4) The fire procedures were displayed on the notice board in the care room.

Non-Compliance Information

1(a) Fire drills were not practiced and recorded on a monthly basis. Records showed that the last fire drill was completed in June 2025. This posed a safety risk to both staff and children in the event of an emergency.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The following statement was received from the registered provider:

Corrective and Preventive Action

A fire drill was carried out in December and recorded in the fire drill book. Fire drills will be practiced and recorded on a monthly basis.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photo of the fire drill record.

Summary Comment

The action taken by the registered provider has addressed the non-compliance identified under Regulation 26.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The registered provider ensured that the service was adequately insured. The insurance policy commenced on 27 September 2025 and will expire on 27 March 2026.