

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2020DY004
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Name of Service:	Small Wonders Montessori & Afterschool Centre
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Address of Service:	Greenhills Community Centre, St. Joseph's Road, Greenhills, Dublin 12, Co. Dublin
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Eircode:	D12 Y899
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Name of Registered Provider:	Aishling Hogan McCormack
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Service type:	Full Day
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Date of Inspection:	24/02/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	34	PM	16
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	The Brunel Building, Heuston South Quarter, St. John's Road West, Dublin 8.
Inspection undertaken by:	R Duff
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

Small wonders early years' service was registered in August 2020 by the current registered provider. Full day care is provided for children aged two to six years of age between the hours of 8am to 6pm, and a concurrent sessional service operates from 9am until 12pm. The service is provided across three rooms. The children have access to a large shared outdoor space to the front of the buildings and two smaller individual outdoor spaces at the sides. School-age care is also provided for children on the premises.

Staffing

The service currently employs 10 staff members including the registered provider who works directly with the children. On the day of inspection 7 staff members were present and working directly with the children.

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 areas of governance, health, welfare and development of child, information and records and safety. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 19 and 23. As a result, the scope of the inspection included rooms the Penguin and Dolphin rooms.

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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.

Additional Information

An immediate action notice was issued to the registered provider on the 24 February 2026 during the inspection in respect of Regulation 23, general safety. A response was received from the service on the 27 February 2026 which sufficiently mitigated the risk identified.

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, 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-

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- (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)(b) The service had a designated person in charge and a named person to deputise as required, both were on the premises throughout the inspection.

(2)

The inspection included a review of the required documentation for 3 staff members employed in the service since the last inspection dated the 16 January 2024. Garda vetting disclosures were assessed for each of the 10 staff members employed in the service. The following documentation was available:

(a)(b) Of the 6 written and validated references that were required, 4 were available from a past employer and 1 from a reputable source.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures from the National Vetting Bureau of An Garda Síochána were available for 10 staff members employed to work in the service. Garda vetting disclosures from all staff members were assessed to determine compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years. Garda vetting which was dated within the last three years was available for 9 staff members, however, the service did not adhere to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice. Please refer to the information outlined under regulation 23 of this report.

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(3) Documentation reviewed evidence that the procedures specified above under 9(2)(a)(b)(c)(d) had been carried out prior to 2 adults commencing employment in the service since the last inspection on 16 January 2024.

(4) Records were available evidencing that 2 staff members employed in the service since the last inspection dated the 16 January 2024 who was employed to work directly with the children held at least the required award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 or above on the National Framework of Qualifications.

Non-Compliance Information

(2)(a)(b)

A second written and verified reference was not available for a one adult.

(3)

The procedures specified in paragraph (2) were not carried out in prior to one adult commencing placement in the service as follows:

One references for one adult had not been sought or verified prior to them commencing placement in the service.

(4)

Documentation was not available to show that one adult who was working directly with the children on the day of inspection held at least a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 or above on the National Framework of Qualifications or a qualification deemed equivalent by the Department of Children, Disability and Equality (DCDE).

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

2)(a)(b) The registered provider has stated that a second written and verified reference has been sought for one adult who required it. An updated file checklist has been developed to ensure all documents are in place before a staff member commences employment.

(4) The adult working directly with the children on the day of inspection is a school age employee who was asked to cover an emergency situation. An additional staff member is available, and their file has been updated. Additional staff will be recruited to ensure adequate staff are available at all times.

Supporting documentation submitted

Supporting documentation has been submitted and reviewed by the early years inspector.

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Summary Comment

The actions taken by the registered provider have addressed the non-compliance. This regulation will be assessed on 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.

(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 children at all times during the inspection.

(2)

The minimum ratio of adults to children for full day care services was adhered to at all times during the inspection. There were 34 children attending the service being supervised by 7 staff members.

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.

(2) A registered provider of a pre-school service in a drop-in centre or of 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 particulars specified in subparagraphs (a), (d), (e) and (f) of paragraph (1).

(3) A record in writing referred to in paragraph (1) or (2) shall be open to inspection on the premises by-

(a) a parent or guardian of a pre-school child but only in respect of the record relating to that child,

(b) an employee who is authorised in that behalf by the registered provider, and

(c) an authorised person.

(4) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing referred to in paragraph (1) is retained for a period of 2 years from the date on which the child to whom it relates ceases to attend the service.

(5) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing referred to in paragraph (2) is retained for a period of 2 years from the date on which the child attends the service.

Compliance Information

(1) The records of 10 children who were attending the service were reviewed and contained the following particulars:

(a) The name and date of birth of each child.

(b) The date on which each child first attended the service.

(c) There was an area on the registration form where the date when a child would cease to attend the service will be recorded.

(d) The names, addresses and telephone numbers of parents were recorded and information where parents can be contacted during the hours of operation of the service were also available.

(e) Names and contact details of other adults who were authorised to collect children were available.

(f) The documentation available supported the recording of specific illnesses, allergies, disabilities and dietary preferences for children.

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- (g) The name and telephone number of nine children's registered medical practitioner was available.
- (h) Records of immunisations received by nine children were detailed.
- (i) Written parental consent for appropriate medical treatment of the child in the event of an emergency.

(3)(c) A record in writing referred to in paragraph (1) was open to inspection on the premises by an authorised person.

Non-Compliance Information

- (g) The name and telephone number of one child's registered medical practitioner was not available.
- (h) Records of immunisations received by one child was not detailed.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The registered provider has stated that the information missing from the two childrens files have been updated and checked. All children's files will be double checked by staff members to ensure all information is present.

Supporting documentation submitted

No supporting documentation submitted.

Summary Comment

The actions taken by the registered provider have addressed the non-compliance. This regulation will be assessed on the next inspection.

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

The inspector observed supportive and respectful care practices in place in the service during the inspection. Staff members were attentive and responsive to the needs of the children throughout the day and were observed to respond to children in a calm and relaxed manner throughout the inspection. The staff provided children with comfort when needed. Staff were observed to support children during conflict resolution or in completion of tasks.

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Children were given advance warnings to support transitions to the outdoors and to alert them of mealtimes. The service has a healthy eating policy which is shared with parents/guardians in advance of enrolment. Children brought snacks from home, and the service provided breakfast and a hot meal for lunch. Meals times were social occasions with children and adults sitting together having the opportunity to chat to each other. Staff provided children with help when needed. Drinks were readily available within the care rooms and children were encouraged to drink them. Children wearing nappies had them changed regularly and children using the toilet were offered support when needed.

Child sized tables and chairs allowed the children to eat and engage in tabletop activities. There was evidence that equipment and materials provided were based on the children's individual needs and emergent interests. The toys and equipment were laid out on low level shelving units and accessible to children. The care rooms had cushions and floor mats to facilitate rest or provide a place for children to take a break from activities.

Children spent time outdoors throughout the day and were dressed appropriate to the weather, wearing wellington boots and outdoor suits. The large outdoor area was equipped with a range of toys and materials to support play experiences. Two additional outdoor areas were also available and used throughout the day. Engagement with families and parents is facilitated by the daily sharing of information on the child's day. This is shared through conversations at drop off and collection and supported by electronic means. On the day of inspection transitions from preschool to home were observed to be friendly, informative and engaging to parents or guardians collecting children.

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:

- When the inspector arrived at the service, access to the main door was monitored and controlled by staff to restrict unauthorized persons from gaining access to the premises and to prevent children from exiting the service unsupervised. In addition, the outdoor play area was enclosed, restricting unauthorized persons from gaining access to this area and to prevent children from exiting the service unsupervised.
- There were no flexes or cables observed that were accessible to the children.

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- The outdoor area was observed to be suitable, safe and secure with domestic bins stored out of children's reach and all outdoor play materials maintained and in good condition free from hazards.

Infection Control:

- The sanitary facilities were equipped with warm water, paper towel, liquid soap, and pedal operated bin.

Administration of Medication:

- Staff demonstrated a clear understanding of procedures to safeguard children when administering medicine. This included getting written consent 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

Fire Safety:

- The designated fire escape routes were clearly indicated and free from obstruction on the day of inspection.
- Staff adequately detailed the procedure to safely evacuate children from the service in the event of a fire and evacuation procedures were on display in the 3 care rooms.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

- In the Dolphin room, the surface temperature of an unguarded radiator was recorded at 70 degrees which is outside the recommended range for an unguarded radiator. An immediate action notice was issued to the registered provider on the 24 February 2026 during the inspection in respect of Regulation 23, general safety. A response was received from the service on the 27 February which sufficiently mitigated the risk identified.
- The service did not adhere to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years for one staff member working in the service.
- In the Dolphin and Penguin rooms, cleaning agents to include disinfectant sprays and liquids were stored in unlocked presses in reach of children. It is acknowledged that staff members locked the presses when this was brought to their attention by the inspector.

Infection Control:

- In the Dolphin room, appropriate infection control measures were not taken during the nappy changing procedure. A staff member was observed to leave their gloves on the entire procedure including

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redressing the child and helping them down from changing unit. The staff member or the child did not wash their hands following the nappy change. This is at variance with the nappy changing procedure displayed in the sanitary area. This poses a significant risk of cross contamination to children.

5. In the Dolphin room, equipment and toys used by the children were observed to be stored in the sanitary area used by the staff. This poses a significant risk of cross contamination to children.
6. In the Dolphin room, the vinyl covering on the children's sofa was torn with foam exposed. The sofa could not be effectively cleaned. This poses a potential risk of cross contamination to children.

Safe Sleep:

7. In the Dolphin room a staff member who was supervising sleeping children was not familiar with recording information to monitor and record children's sleep. The registered provider was observed to demonstrate procedures to document and monitor children's sleep to the staff member subsequent to the children sleeping.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

The registered provider has stated that:

1. The radiators in the Dolphin room have been moved to adult head height to ensure children cannot access them.
2. Updated Garda vetting has been received for a member of staff through the Tusla portal. A reminder has been set to ensure all updated vetting is applied for on time.
3. The staff members have been reminded to keep the press containing cleaning products locked. A reminder poster has been placed over the presses in each room containing cleaning products.

Infection Control:

4. Staff members have been reminded of the policy and procedures for changing nappies. This has been reiterated at staff meetings.
5. Equipment and toys have been removed from the sanitary area in the Dolphin room; staff members have been reminded not to store equipment or toys in this area.
6. The children's sofa was removed from the Dolphin room; staff will monitor equipment and toys each day using a checklist.

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Safe Sleep:

7. Staff have been retrained on using the app used by the service to record sleep checks, all new staff will be given guidance on using the sleep checks on the app going forward.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

- Supporting documentation has been submitted and reviewed by the early years inspector in respect of point 1,2 and 3.

Infection Control:

- Supporting documentation in the form of a photograph was submitted to show the equipment has been removed from the sanitary area.

Safe Sleep:

- No supporting documentation submitted.

Summary Comment

The regulatory requirement has been met. This regulation will be assessed on the next inspection.

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 the sessional service was insured. The insurance certificate provided for review showed cover for the 48 children and an expiry date of 27 March 2026.