

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2023DL005		
Name of Service:	Wonder years CS		
Address of Service:	Cashelshanaghan, Ramelton Road, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal		
Eircode:	F92 FT85		
Name of Registered Provider:	Marcella McNamee		
Service type:	Full Day, Sessional.		
Date of Inspection:	14/08/2025		
No of pre-school children:	AM	49	PM 48
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Donegal Early Years Inspectorate, St. Conal's Campus, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal. F95 XK94		
Inspection undertaken by:	N. McEndoo & S. Killeen.		
Title:	Early Years Inspectors		
Authority to Inspect			
The Tusla Early Years Inspectorate carries out inspections of Early Years Services under Section 58(J) of the Child Care Act 1991 (as inserted by Section 92 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013).			
Conditions if applicable	Not Applicable		

Description of service

Wonder Years CS is a privately owned and operated service located in a rural area along the main road from Letterkenny to Ramelton in County Donegal. The service is registered to provide full day and sessional preschool care to children aged between one and six years old. The operating hours are from 8.15am to 5.30pm and the sessional service runs from 9.00am to 12.00pm.

The service operates from a purpose built detached two storey premises. There are two care rooms on the ground floor and three care rooms on the first floor. A large outdoor play area is available on-site and subdivided for use by different groups of children.

Staffing

There were 19 adults working in the service on the day of inspection which included the registered provider, manager and person in charge. Of these 19 adults, 13 were employed to work directly with the children, there were two staff members employed in auxiliary roles and one of the adults employed in the role of quality professional development officer.

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, premises and facilities. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under Regulation 16 – Records in relation to the pre-school service. A sample of 14 records were reviewed to evaluate compliance with Regulation 16(1)(k). The scope of the inspection included all five rooms within the service, identified as Tiny Tots, Little Smarties, Little Stars, Junior Einsteins, and Little Scholars.

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,
- (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)

The registered provider ensured that.

- (a) There was a designated person in charge and a named adult to deputise in their absence.
- (b) The designated person in charge was available on the premises throughout the period of inspection.
- (c) There was 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.

(2)

Following a review of previous inspection information, information available on inspection and discussion with the person in charge it was determined that six new staff members had been employed since the previous inspection. All new staff members worked directly with the children. In addition, Garda vetting for one staff member whose disclosure was identified as due for renewal was requested for review. The six files for new staff were reviewed, and the following information was noted.

- (a) 12 written validated references from past employers for 6 of the adults.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all adults.
- (d) Police vetting from the police authorities in another state was available for one adult who had lived outside the state for a period of six consecutive months or more.

(3)

The procedures specified above in paragraph (2) were carried out prior to any person being appointed, assigned or allowed access to or contact with a child attending the pre-school service.

(4)

Six of the adult files reviewed, evidenced they held a major award at level 5 or above in early childhood care and education on the national qualification framework, or qualifications deemed by the Department of Children, Disability and Equality (DCDE) to meet the regulatory requirement.

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)

On the day of inspection, there was an adequate number of adults working directly with the preschool children attending the service.

(2)

The minimum ratio of adults to children was maintained throughout the inspection.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 16 – Record in relation to pre-school service

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of the following information in relation to the service:

(k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.

(3) A record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection on the premises, and the documents and records referred to in paragraph (2)(a) shall be open to inspection whether on the premises or elsewhere, by an authorised person.

Compliance Information

(3)
Records regarding Regulation 16 (1) (k) were present on the premises and made available to the inspectors on the day of inspection.

Non-Compliance Information

(1) (k)
A sample of accident and incidents records involving a pre-school child were reviewed for this regulation. The following information had been omitted from the forms.

- The signature of the parent was not present on one form.
- The manager’s signature was omitted from six of the forms.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The team has received updated guidance via email outlining the correct procedure for completing accident and incident forms. This step-by-step guide aims to ensure consistency and accuracy in documentation. A weekly review of the incident/accident report book has now been incorporated into our monitoring schedule and will be overseen by the manager

Supporting documentation submitted

An email from the Registered Provider to staff outlining the step-by-step procedure for completing accident and incident forms was submitted as evidence.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The noncompliance identified under Regulation 16(1)(k) has been adequately addressed.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 21 – Equipment and materials

A registered provider shall ensure that there is adequate and suitable furniture, play and work equipment and materials available on the premises of the pre-school service.

Compliance Information

The service was observed to be well-equipped with a broad range of developmentally appropriate, safe, and well-maintained materials that supported children's learning and play. Indoors, play materials were stored on low-level shelving, making them easily accessible to children and encouraging independent use. These materials were organized into clearly defined interest areas, such as a home corner, library area, and ice-cream shop, supporting various types of play such as imaginative, sensory, creative, fine motor, and literacy development.

Toys and equipment were made from durable, easy-to-clean materials including wood, and plastic. All items were maintained in good condition, with a cleaning schedule and daily risk assessments in place to monitor wear and tear. Ample supply of materials ensured there was variety and challenge in the children's play experiences.

Furniture included an adequate number of child-sized tables and chairs suitable for group play and mealtimes, as well as adult-sized seating for staff for comfortable supervision.

The outdoor play area was well-developed and divided into three areas according to age group. Each area contained a wide variety of equipment designed to promote gross motor development and supervised risk-taking. Equipment included swings, slides, tents, and messy play areas such as a covered sand box, outdoor kitchen and a supervised firepit. Smaller items such as hula-hoops, trucks, bikes and scooters were also available to support physical movement activities. All outdoor materials were accessible to the children, developmentally appropriate and arranged to encourage independent and group play.

Non-Compliance Information

1. The wooden seat pad of the outdoor see-saw was observed to be jagged in parts and required replacing.
2. Two damaged and broken scooters were observed by the inspector in the outdoor area; it is acknowledged these items were removed by staff when brought to their attention.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

1. The damaged seat pad has been replaced. This update has been added to the risk assessment sheet and will be monitored weekly.
2. A full check of all toys and equipment was carried out by the maintenance team. All damaged items have been removed, and monitoring of playground toys and equipment has been added to the risk assessment.

Supporting documentation submitted

1. Photographic evidence of replacement of damaged seat.

2. Copy of risk assessment with additional checks.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 21 has been adequately addressed.

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 was found to be secured on arrival preventing unauthorised access or exit from the premises.
- Tall fencing was present around the perimeter of the outdoor area. Gates to each area were secured with bolts placed up high out of reach of the child, preventing unsupervised exit.
- Safety gates were present at the top of the stairwell to prevent children from accessing the staircase unsupervised.
- Warm running water was available for hand washing at a safe temperature below 43°C.
- Cleaning products and equipment were stored out of the reach of children.
- Warm sauces were stored and served using thermal lidded jugs during mealtimes, helping to reduce the risk of scalding.

Infection Control:

- At the time of inspection, materials and resources across the service were observed to be visibly clean.
- Sanitary facilities were observed to be kept maintained and clean.
- Tables were observed to be cleaned prior to and after mealtimes.
- Foot operated pedal bins were available within the service for safe disposal of waste.
- Cleaning schedules were available on-site and demonstrated evidence of regular completion.
- There was adequate handwashing facilities provided throughout the service with warm water, liquid soap and paper towels available. Child friendly handwashing posters were placed beside the sinks.
- Aprons and gloves were available to adults when changing of a child was required.

Safe Sleep:

- During the designated rest period, older children were observed to remain awake. Staff members were present and provided supervision throughout this time.
- Younger children were observed to sleep either on floor beds or in cots, according to their age and stage of development. A minimum distance of at least 50cm was observed between sleep equipment.
- Sleep checks were carried out every 10 minutes, with the children's position, breathing pattern and colour recorded.

Fire Safety:

- Fire extinguishers were on the premises and easily accessible.
- Fire exits were observed to be unobstructed, ensuring safe and immediate exit or access in the event of an emergency.
- The service-maintained records of staff rosters and visitor sign-in/sign-out logs to ensure accurate accountability during an emergency evacuation, supporting effective fire safety procedures.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. A blind cord was observed not to be secured in the Little Scholar's room. The cord was out of reach of children; however, it could pose a risk should a child climb to reach it.
2. Several areas of the outdoor playground surface had contracted, creating gaps that could present as a tripping hazard.

Infection Control:

3. On the day of inspection, after nappy changing, the hands of the babies and staff were observed not to be consistently washed, posing a risk of infection.
4. Mechanical ventilation units in the Little Stars sanitary area were observed to have visible dust accumulation, indicating they require cleaning to prevent potential airborne contamination and maintain appropriate infection control standards.

Safe Sleep:

5. The Sleep room temperatures were recorded more than the acceptable ranges of 16 to 20°C for children under the age of 12 months. It is acknowledged when brought to the attention of management, air conditioning units were brought to the area which reduced the room temperature immediately.

Fire Safety:

6. It was noted that children were at times difficult to account for during the day due to transitions between rooms, particularly following sleep times. This practice may compromise the accuracy of headcounts and cause delay posing as a potential risk in the event of a fire evacuation, or other emergency.
7. A fire door in the Junior Einsteins room was observed to be held open with a chair. An open fire door allows smoke and flames to travel freely, accelerating the spread of fire.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. The blind cord, previously positioned out of children's reach, has now been securely fastened to the wall as an additional safety precaution. Any new blinds moving forward will be fitted with the safety attachments to the wall.
2. Areas of the soft pour surfacing that had lifted have since been securely re-adhered in place. This is part of the playground risk assessment and will be monitored and recorded weekly

Infection Control:

3. Measures have been reinforced through the circulation of information on effective handwashing, with emphasis on nappy-changing procedures. This will be revisited during monthly team progression sessions. Preventative action has been noted, and closer monitoring will be implemented going forward.
4. The mechanical ventilation fans were on a weekly cleaning schedule this is now increased to twice per week. The housekeeping team has been informed, and the cleaning schedule will be adjusted and increased as necessary.

Safe Sleep:

5. On the day of inspection, the sleep room temperature was noted to be above the acceptable range of 16–20°C. Two new air conditioning units were purchased and installed immediately. All staff have been reminded of the safe sleep procedures and are actively monitoring room temperatures. Continued monitoring is in place to ensure compliance with safe sleep guidelines.

Fire Safety:

6. It was observed during sleep time transitions that temporary room changes were not consistently recorded on sign-in charts. To address this, additional lines have been added to all charts to allow educators to record such movements. Evidence of this revised system was submitted, and its implementation is expected to resolve the issue.

7. On the day of inspection, it was noted that an internal fire door had been temporarily propped open with a chair to allow air circulation, as the room was warm. While the intention was to cool the room, this practice is not in line with fire safety requirements. All employees have since been reminded that fire doors must always remain closed and have been instructed to refrain from using this practice going forward. The registered provider as stated that they will continue to monitor and reinforce best practice.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

1. Photographic evidence submitted.
2. Photographic evidence submitted.

Infection Control:

3. A copy of the staff-wide circulation regarding reinforced hygiene measures and handwashing procedures, with emphasis on nappy-changing, was submitted as evidence.
4. Updated cleaning schedule submitted.

Safe Sleep:

5. Inspectors were on the premises when the air conditions were purchased.

Fire Safety:

6. Sign-in/sign-out sheets for room transitions were submitted as evidence, confirming procedures in place for tracking children's movement between rooms.
7. No evidence submitted.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 23 has been adequately addressed.

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)
The registered provider ensured that there was a person trained in First Aid Response (FAR) for children, available to the children at all times while attending the preschool service.

(2) (a)(b)
Suitably equipped first aid boxes were securely stored, and clearly identifiable, in each care room. The first aid supplies were sufficient to meet the needs of the number of children in attendance. The equipment was readily accessible for use in the event of a medical incident involving a child.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 27 – Supervision

A registered provider shall ensure that pre-school children attending the service are supervised at all times.

Compliance Information

During the inspection, the required ratio of qualified adults to children was maintained, ensuring that every child was under the supervision of a qualified staff member.

Staff were observed to be strategically positioned throughout the indoor environment to facilitate continuous visual and auditory supervision. This enabled them to engage purposefully with the children while remaining responsive to their individual needs.

During mealtimes, staff were seated in close proximity to the children, providing appropriate support and supervision, and promoting a calm, inclusive, and socially enriching atmosphere.

The outdoor play area was arranged to allow staff to maintain clear lines of sight and sound, thereby ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all children while outdoors.

Staff demonstrated good practice by ensuring that sleeping children were continuously monitored. Sleep areas were arranged to allow unobstructed visibility, and staff conducted regular physical checks in accordance with the service's sleep policy. Records of these checks were maintained appropriately.