

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2023DL005
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Name of Service:	Wonderyears CS
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Address of Service:	Cashelshanaghan, Ramelton Road, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal
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Eircode:	F92 FT85
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Name of Registered Provider:	Marcella McNamee
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Service type:	Full Day, Sessional
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Date(s) of Inspection:	19/09/2024
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No of pre-school children:	AM	52	PM	34
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Donegal Early Years Inspectorate, St. Conal's Campus, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal. F95 XK94
Inspection undertaken by:	L Mc Glynn
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

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 27 adults working in the service on the day of inspection which included the registered provider.

There were 17 staff members employed to work directly with the children, 2 staff members employed in auxiliary roles and 1 adult employed in the role of quality professional development officer. The remaining 6 adults were present in the service on educational placement.

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 announced and focused on the area of governance/ health, welfare and development of child/ safety. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9, 11, 19, and 23; however, on inspection additional non-compliance which posed a risk was identified under Regulation 8. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulation within this report.

Inspection findings are documented in the inspection report which is first issued in draft format to the service with an opportunity to respond to any findings. Where statutory requirements are identified as not being met, the registered provider must demonstrate how they have rectified the non-compliance and will prevent any non-compliance from re occurring. The Corrective Action and Preventive Action plan (CAPA) will be used to inform decisions about compliance with regulatory requirements. Where the registered provider fails to meet the statutory requirements an escalation process may be commenced.

The inspectorate reserves the right to edit responses received for reasons including clarity, completeness and compliance with administrative and legal processes.

The contents of the report are compiled by the inspectorate body.

Acknowledgments

The inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, person in charge, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

Part II - Registration and Register

Regulation 8 - Notification of change in circumstances

(1) A registered provider of a pre-school service other than a temporary pre-school service shall, subject to paragraph (3), notify the Agency in writing of any proposed change in the details in relation to the pre-school service contained in the register pursuant to section 58C(2) of the Act or Regulation 7(2) at least 60 days before it is proposed that the change would take effect.

Non-Compliance Information

The service was found on inspection to be operating outside of their registration status with regards to the age range of children they can provide for. The service is registered to care for children aged over one year. There was one child in attendance on the day of inspection aged 11 months. Notification of the proposed change in age

range catered for had not been submitted to the Inspectorate at least 60 days before the proposed change was implemented, as required under this Regulation.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The service applied for a change in circumstances to change age profile from 0 to 6 years. The service is now approved to care for children under 1 year.

Supporting documentation submitted

Evidence of approval submitted.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 8 has been adequately addressed.

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) There was a named person in charge of the daily operation of the service and a second person to deputise in the event of their absence.

(b) A review of staff attendance records indicated that the person in charge or the named deputy were on the premises at all times during the hours of operation.

(c) An induction booklet developed by management outlined the management structure within the service and included specific roles and responsibilities of employees. Staff demonstrated a sound understanding of their own role and the lines of authority within the service.

(2) All 27 staff files were reviewed on this inspection. The following vetting documents were furnished and deemed to be satisfactory.

(a) (b) There were 51 validated references on file in respect of the 27 adults from past employers or a source other than a previous employer.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all adults. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(4) Documentary evidence was provided to demonstrate that 18 adults had obtained a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at level 5 or above on the National Framework of Qualifications or equivalent.

Non-Compliance Information

(2) (a) (b) There was no second reference on file for three adults working in the service as part of their educational placement.

(d) Confirmation of appropriate international police vetting was not available in respect of two of the adults working in the service for whom documentation presented at inspection indicated that they had resided in another state for a period longer than six consecutive months as an adult.

It is acknowledged that a copy of international police vetting documentation in respect of one of these adults was presented on the day of inspection, however this was unsuitable for the purposes of police vetting as an International Child Protection Certificate (ICPC) was required for this employee who was recruited after 2012 when the ICPC was introduced.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(2) (a) (b) All students Files have been updated with an additional reference from a known and reputable source. Each Reference has been checked and validated. We have updated our students onboarding procedure to ensure references received are not generic.

(d) We have updated the onboarding process to ensure all vetting and ICPC are received before commencement. All checks will be carried out, and appropriate paperwork will be received before offering the position.

Supporting documentation submitted

A copy of the onboarding process for the service, copies of references and evidence of ICPC applications were submitted.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 9 has been adequately addressed.

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) A sufficient number of adults were involved in the direct care and supervision of the children who attended the service.

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

When assessed on arrival to the service the following adult child ratios were observed;

- In the Little Smarties room, three adults cared for nine children aged 18 months to 2 years.
- In the Tiny Tots room, two adults cared for five children aged 11 months to 1 year.
- In the Little Stars room, two adults cared for seven children aged 1-2 years.
- In the Little Scholars room, two adults cared for 11 children aged 2-3 years.
- In the Junior Einsteins room, three adults cared for 20 children aged 2-4 years.

When assessed in the afternoon, the following ratios were observed;

- In the Little Smarties room, two adults cared for eight children aged 18 months to 2 years.
- In the Tiny Tots room, two adults cared for four children aged 11 months to 1 year.
- In the Little Stars room, two adults cared for seven children aged 1-2 years.
- In the Junior Einsteins room, three adults cared for 15 children aged 2-4 years.

(8) (a) The registered provider ensured that there were at least two adults on the premises when children were present in the service as evidenced in a sample of attendance records reviewed.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 19 - Health, welfare and development of child

(1) A registered provider shall, in providing a pre-school service, ensure that-

(a) each child's learning, development and well-being is facilitated within the daily life of the pre-school service through the provision of the appropriate activities, interaction, materials and equipment, having regard to the age and stage of development of the child, and

Compliance Information

(1) (a) All meals and snacks were prepared on site for children and a weekly menu plan was available. It was discussed with the inspector that the menu had recently been changed to reflect the likes and preferences of the children attending. The menu on the day of inspection was varied and balanced. Children appeared to enjoy their meals and adequate portions were provided. Drinking water was available at 'hydration stations' in each care room and children were observed getting their own drinks as desired. Staff encouraged independence during mealtimes giving children the opportunity to feed themselves appropriate to their age and stage of development.

Nappy changing and toileting was carried out at regular intervals and staff were positive, engaging and appropriately sensitive in their approach. Independence was encouraged where appropriate and older

children had free access to the sanitary facilities. Children's personal care needs were tended to promptly, hands and faces were washed when soiled and spare clothing was available if required. The weather on the day of inspection was sunny and children spent considerable periods of time outdoors. Staff demonstrated sound understanding of sun safety and spoke about keeping children in shaded areas while outdoors. Suncream was also applied to children before being exposed to the sun.

Younger children were observed sleeping at various intervals throughout the day based on their individual sleep needs. Although the older children were placed to sleep at a scheduled time in the afternoon, staff members spoke of individual sleep needs and how a child's routine can vary from day to day. Staff were observed to provide for variations in children's routine, with some children continuing to play and offered a rest at a later time. There were areas within each of the care rooms for children who didn't sleep, to rest and relax for periods throughout the day.

Staff members were observed to be warm, caring and engaging in their interactions with children. Staff used routine times such as mealtimes, toileting and free play moments as opportunities to interact with children, regularly questioning and listening to children. Children were encouraged to positively engage with each other and be mindful of the feelings of others which contributed to an atmosphere of friendship and working together.

There was evidence of a strong partnership with parents within the service. Parents were kept informed through a daily record book of the younger children's eating, sleeping and toileting patterns throughout the day. Collection time was also observed to be used by staff to communicate the child's well-being throughout the day. There was familiarity in the interactions between staff, management and parents which evidenced a good working relationship.

Structured team meetings known as 'progression sessions' occurred regularly between management and staff and there was evidence of the desire to ensure meetings were productive and beneficial to the staff and have a positive outcome on the children and the service. Staff members displayed a positive attitude to teamwork and were observed to be supportive of each other modelling positive ways of interacting with the children and each other. Staff were also cognisant of the need to ensure children's needs were

met and updated each other on the preferences of children in their care, this provided a smooth, consistent response for children.

Younger children were provided with opportunities to change position, roll, crawl and sit during the day with adults providing appropriate support. Ample time was given for floor play with unhindered space for free movement. Older children were observed moving freely through the rooms engaging with the range of play opportunities available.

The service operates a key worker system whereby the children are assigned a member of staff who undertakes regular observation of their learning and development. Children's preferences, likes and interests were evident in the planning templates and staff spoke with a comfortable understanding of the learning needs of the children in their care. Individual learning records were maintained for each child.

There was a varied provision of play materials and equipment suitable for the age range and number of children attending in each care room. The atmosphere in the learning environments were encouraging and unhurried. Toys, play equipment and items of interest were attractively displayed and readily accessible at low levels so as to promote children's choice and independent access when selecting their play materials. The equipment and materials within each of the rooms was carefully considered with a range of plastic play materials alongside natural open-ended materials with an apparent focus on the inclusion of 'loose parts' to enhance creativity and thinking. The resources within the rooms were laid out to create interest areas such as a home corners, shop areas, messy and sensory play, tabletop, construction, reading, junk art, loose parts and art areas. Each of the areas contained resources to support children to engage in meaningful play that stimulated their senses or enhanced their learning. Resources within these areas included dolls houses, construction blocks, small world items, garages with transport vehicles and work benches. A mix of both play and real-world resources were used to enhance some of the interest areas. Large tuff trays in each room provided sensory play with dried cereals and children's fine motor development was supported with the use of jigsaws, shape sorters and peg boards. A range of books were available in the reading areas to support children's language development.

The outdoor areas provided ample space for children to engage in energetic play. A range of fixed developmentally appropriate equipment was provided alongside items that were transportable between

the indoor and outdoor area. Children were observed engaged in various different types of play in each of the areas including risky play, moving at a speed on the roundabout and more focused activities such as playing with playdough at picnic benches.

Ongoing observations in the form of ‘captured moments’ were documented for each child and used by staff to plan the curriculum in each room. In discussion with staff members, it was noted that the curriculum was led by the observations but remained flexible to accommodate emerging interests of 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:

- The main entrance to the building was secured on the inspector’s arrival to the service and remained secured throughout the inspection. A buzzer system was in place to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the service. Doors leading out of the building were adequately secured to prevent children from exiting unsupervised.
- Internal doors were secured to prevent children accessing unsafe areas and store cupboards containing hazardous objects and materials were secured and inaccessible to children. The kitchen was inaccessible to children at all times.
- The grounds of the service and all outdoor play areas were secured with boundary fencing preventing children from exiting unsupervised.
- The staircase was adequately lit with a suitable handrail provided and the floor was in good condition and non-slip.
- A red folder was stored at the entrance to each of the care rooms and contained information on individual children’s allergies to prevent any potential exposure.
- Documented daily risk assessments on the indoor and outdoor environments were available and detailed checks carried out by staff each morning.

Infection Control:

- Documented and up-to-date cleaning schedules were available. The premises, play equipment and materials were maintained in a visibly clean and hygienic condition.
- Appropriate equipment such as aprons and gloves required for cleaning and nappy changing practices were available and there were adequate stocks of cleaning supplies and equipment in a designated storage area.
- Thermostatically controlled warm water, liquid soap and single use paper towels were available to support hand hygiene practices at wash hand basins in the pre-school rooms and the children's sanitary accommodation.
- The care rooms were observed to be well ventilated on the day of inspection; a good supply of natural ventilation was provided via openable windows which were left ajar at various times during the day to promote regular air exchange.

Administration of Medication:

- A record was maintained of all medication administered in the service with appropriate parental consent. Staff, when questioned, were conversant of the procedure within the service for the safe administration of medication. All medications were stored in secure areas within each room.

Safe Sleep:

- Two designated sleep rooms were available in the service, one adjacent to the tiny tot's room and the other adjacent to the little smarties room. There were 14 cots in total available within the service. Each cot was clearly labelled and assigned to individual children with a supply of clean bed linen available for use.
- Physical checks at five minutes intervals were carried out and documented by staff. A sample of the sleep records were reviewed on inspection and these included details of the time of the check, the staff member who carried out the check, the sleep position of each child, any change in the child's normal skin colour and any change in the child's normal breathing pattern.

Fire Safety:

1. Emergency exits were free from obstruction and there was a documented record of fire drills having taken place monthly.

Non-Compliance Information

Safe Sleep:

1. The service did not adhere to the current Tusla *'Guidance for Early Learning and Care Sector on sleep provision for children under 24 months'* as evidenced by the following;

- There was no evidence of consultation with and permission from parents for three children aged under two years who were placed to sleep on stackable floor beds.
 - The floor beds used for sleeping children under two years did not meet the requirements as set out in the guidance document.
 - Supervision was not provided at all times when children were sleeping on floor beds.
2. Cardboard backed thermometers were used exclusively to measure the air temperature of the sleep rooms. When measured by the inspector, the air temperature on the cardboard backed thermometer was at variance with the reading on the digital air probe. A system of recording accurate room temperatures is required to ensure that room temperatures are maintained at safe levels for sleeping children.
 3. With the exception of the morning risk assessment, there were no other documented readings of air temperature within the sleep rooms.

Infection Control:

4. It could not be determined on inspection that adequate ventilation was provided in the sanitary accommodation serving the little scholar's room.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

Safe Sleep:

1.
 - The service had written permission on file; however, it did not meet the required Tusla guidelines. The service now uses the recommended template, and the three children in question have the updated consent form.
 - New floor beds are ordered to meet the needs of children under two in the event it is deemed unsafe for them to remain sleeping in a cot.
 - Children are now supervised in the sleep room when sleeping in beds.
Amended forms are now in use, as per guidance. In the future, new beds are now available for children under two, where it is deemed unsafe to sleep in a cot. These beds meet the safe sleep requirements listed in the guidance document.
2. The service has purchased digital thermometers for all rooms, including sleep rooms. They are now in all rooms, and backup batteries are stored in the main office.
3. The safe sleep monitoring check charts have been updated to incorporate room temperature every ten minutes. These updated charts will ensure that temperatures are closely monitored.

Infection Control:

4. There is an air vent in Little Scholars' sanitary room. There are provisions made to install Velux windows for extra ventilation. This should ensure better ventilation.

Supporting documentation submitted

Sleep plans for children, receipts for the purchase of floor beds, photo evidence of digital thermometers and revised sleep check templates were submitted with the CAPA response.

Summary Comment

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