

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

<b>TUSLA Identifier:</b>	TU2024DS005
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<b>Name of Service:</b>	Once Upon a Time
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<b>Address of Service:</b>	The Oaks, The View, Barnoaks, Citywest, Dublin 24.
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<b>Eircode:</b>	D24W31V
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<b>Name of Registered Provider:</b>	David McCormack, AnneMarie McCormack
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<b>Service type:</b>	Full Day
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<b>Date 1 of Inspection:</b>	03/11/2025
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<b>Date 2 of Inspection:</b>	04/11/2025
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<b>No of pre-school children – Date 1:</b>	AM	84	PM	84
<b>No of pre-school children – Date 2:</b>	AM	85	PM	84

<b>Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:</b>	Early Years Inspectorate, Suite 7, Vista Primary Care, Ballymore Eustace Rd, Naas, Co Kildare.
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<b>Inspection undertaken by:</b>	E. Mulhern and S. Quigley
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<b>Title:</b>	Early Years Inspectors
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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).

<b>Conditions if applicable</b>	N/A
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### Description of service

Once Upon a Time is 1 of 11 private full day care services provided by the registered providers. The service accommodates children aged 1-6 years from 07:30 to 18:30, Monday to Friday. The premises is located in a purposely adapted two story building in a residential area of Citywest, south Dublin. There are seven care rooms and two cot rooms on the ground floor and one care room on the first floor. The premises also includes an office, kitchen and sanitary facilities. There is a fully enclosed outdoor area to the side of the premises.

### Staffing

The service currently employs 31 staff which includes the management team and kitchen staff. There are 23 staff employed to work directly with the children. Eighteen staff, an assistant manager and a student were working directly with the children when the inspectors arrived at the service on the first day of inspection. One staff member who had been transferred to work in one of the registered provider's other services was transferred back to work in this service after the inspection commenced. The service manager, area manager, support manager and operations manager also worked with the children during the inspection.

### 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, safety and notifications and complaints. 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.

## Additional Information

The inspection was triggered due to information received by the inspectorate on 6 October 2025.

## Acknowledgments

The inspectors wish to acknowledge the cooperation of management, staff and children who were present on the days 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*

*(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.*

*(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.*

*(7) A registered provider shall ensure that all employees, unpaid workers and contractors are appropriately supervised and provided with appropriate information, and where necessary training, including in relation to the following:*

- (a) the policies, procedures and statements of the service specified in Schedule 5;*
- (b) Part VIIA (inserted by section 92 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013 (No. 40 of 2013)) of the Act, and*
- (c) these Regulations.*

### Compliance Information

- (1)
- (a) The service had a person in charge and a named person to deputise.
- (b) Either the person in charge or a person who could deputise were on the premises throughout the inspection. The staff roster provided for the person in charge or a deputy to be present at all times of opening.
- (2) The inspection focused on records for 24 adults employed since the previous inspection dated 4 March 2025.
- (a) & (b) Appropriate references were available for each adult with a record of verification checks carried out by the service.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all staff. The service adhered to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
- (d) International police vetting was available for all adults who had lived outside the state as an adult for more than six months.
- (3) The records outlined in regulation 9(2) above were dated prior to the commencement date of the adults in the service.
- (4) All adults employed to work directly with children held at least a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at a minimum Level 5 on the National Framework of Qualifications or a qualification deemed equivalent by the minister.
- (7) (a) The inspection focused on induction procedures for staff employed since the previous inspection on 4 March 2025. Twenty-four adults had been employed since that date. The inspectors spoke to a sample of the adults in relation to their induction. They reported they had undergone a comprehensive induction process which included training and provision of the service's policies and procedures. Detailed records of the inductions were available and were signed by staff and management. These were in keeping with the service's staff induction policy. Certificates of training were also available in the induction files.

## 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.*

#### Compliance Information

The inspection focused on the service's Behaviour Management policy. The service had this policy available, and the content met the regulatory requirements.

## 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 with the children. There were 18 staff members, a manager and a student working directly with 84 children when the inspectors arrived at the service on the first day of inspection. Five adults which included the senior management team provided assistance.

(2) The minimum adult to child ratio requirement for the age of children and type of service provided was always maintained.

### 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.*

#### Compliance Information

(1) (k) Records were available of accidents and incidents that had occurred in the service. A sample of records dated since the previous inspection 4 March 2025 were reviewed. These included the required information and had been signed by the children’s parents/guardians indicating the information had been shared.

### 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.*

*(3) A registered provider shall ensure that no practices that are disrespectful, degrading, exploitive, intimidating, emotionally or physically harmful or neglectful are carried out in respect of a pre-school child whilst attending the service.*

#### Compliance Information

(1)(b) The adults supported the children to manage their personal care. They reminded and assisted them to wash their hands and clean their noses as needed. Children wearing nappies had these changed at scheduled times and in between when needed. The older children used the toilet independently. Children observed in the outdoor area wore coats appropriate to the weather.

Meals and snacks were provided at regular intervals throughout the day. The children sat in small groups with adults when eating. The adults assisted the children when needed. Drinks were available within each room and the service provided meals. Staff demonstrated an awareness of the children’s food preferences and food allergies and a record of these was available in the children’s rooms. These were adhered to at mealtimes.

Transitions from activities to care routines were appropriately managed with staff explaining to the children what was going to happen next. Staff made records in relation to the children regarding nappy changing and meals eaten which they reported they use to inform the parents/guardians on collection.

(3) Prohibited practices were outlined in the service’s behaviour management policy. Staff demonstrated a knowledge of the policy and the prohibited practices during discussions with the inspectors. They were aware of the service’s designated liaison person as detailed in the services child safeguarding statement. The staff spoke kindly to the children and were gentle in their handling. No prohibited practices were observed.

### Non-Compliance Information

19 (1)(b) Sleep practices were observed on the first day of inspection. The practices did not provide for the individual sleep needs of children to be met as outlined below.

1. Two children in the Toddler 2 room who did not show any signs of tiredness were required to sleep at the service’s designated sleep period. The children were observed attempting to resist this for an hour whilst a staff member made repeated efforts to have the children lie down and sleep. This was contrary to the service’s safe sleep policy which stated “...a child should never be forced to sleep if they do not wish to.”

2. When the inspector arrived at the Toddler 3 room in the afternoon, a child was observed lying under a table asleep. The adult in the room proceeded to take the child out from under the table but did not make any efforts to accommodate the child to sleep. The child tried to lie back down on the floor, but the adult took him up and asked him if he’d like to read a book. When questioned regarding this, the adult reported she did “not know if he was allowed to sleep”. When another adult entered the room, a discussion was had about the child, and the child was placed to sleep in the Pre-Montessori room. However, the child was woken by staff after approximately 40 minutes when the designated sleep period ended. The child immediately started to cry, and the inspector observed the child crying and rubbing his eyes for an hour afterwards.

Failure to facilitate children to sleep according to their needs can lead to increased irritability and can impact negatively on their emotional and physical development. Practices and procedures relating to this were found to be non-compliant on the last two inspections dated 9 December 2024 and 4 March 2025. The actions submitted by the registered provider following those inspections had not corrected or prevented the issue.

### Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

#### Corrective and Preventive Action

1. All educators were instructed to immediately stop requiring children to lie down or sleep when they do not show signs of tiredness. Educators were reminded verbally of the service's safe sleep policy: "A child should never be forced to sleep if they do not wish to." Alternative rest options (quiet play, books, puzzles, drawing, calm corner) are provided for children who are not tired. Families were invited to review or update their child's sleep routines and preferences. The two children involved had updated sleep/rest preference documentation completed and placed in their room's planning folder.

2. A reflective discussion was held with the educator who was unsure of whether the child "was allowed to sleep." Clear expectations were set that all staff must know and follow the safe sleep policy at all times. All staff were instructed that children must be supported to sleep whenever they display tiredness cues, regardless of the scheduled routine. All staff participated in a refresher training session covering:

- Safe sleep policy and regulatory requirements
- Responding to individual sleep cues
- Respectful interactions during rest periods

Plans will be reviewed at least every three months or as children's needs change. Manager will conduct weekly audits to ensure:

- Staff awareness of sleep requirements
- Individual needs are being met
- No child is being forced to sleep due to parents' request
- That children must never be prevented from sleeping or woken unnecessarily
- Correct accommodation of sleep needs

#### Supporting documentation submitted

Document titled 'Training Agreement' indicating staff intention to attend training on 27 January 2026.

Document titled 'Training evening – Staff Training Memo' dated 27 January 2026

#### Summary Comment

The actions submitted if implemented should address the non-compliance.

### Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

#### Regulation 20 – Facilities for rest and play

- (1) Subject to this regulation, a registered provider shall ensure that-
- (b) there are adequate and suitable facilities for a pre-school child to rest during the day, and in the case of an overnight pre-school service, during the day and the night.

#### Compliance Information

The service had suitable facilities for rest and sleep. Children less than two years of age slept in cots or on floor beds. Stackable beds were available for children over the age of two years. These were spaced more than 50cm apart for infection control. Appropriate bedding was provided. Areas were available within the rooms with soft matting or seating where a children could rest or take a break from activities.

### 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

##### Administration of Medication:

No children were observed receiving medication during the inspection. Medications were stored in original packaging out of reach of children but easily accessible to staff. Staff demonstrated an awareness of children who may require medicine such as inhalers for asthma and documented care-plans were available within these children's rooms. Staff demonstrated an understanding of how to administer medication safely if required. This included obtaining written parent/guardian consent, having a second staff member witness the administration and making a record.

#### Non-Compliance Information

##### Infection Control:

The inspection focused on the management of soothers in relation to infection control. It is acknowledged that soothers were stored appropriately in individually labelled containers and a sample of staff reported they are cleaned daily in adherence with the service's cleaning schedule. However, two staff from separate care rooms reported that they clean the soothers every second day contrary to the cleaning schedule, posing an increased risk of infection.

## Action submitted by the Registered Provider

### Corrective & Preventive Action

#### Infection Control:

All educators were immediately reminded that soothers must be cleaned and sanitised daily as per the service's infection control policy. All staff participated in a refresher session covering:

- Infection control protocols
- Correct soother handling and cleaning
- The importance of accurate reporting

A protocol has been introduced requiring staff to immediately report any uncertainties or misunderstandings regarding hygiene procedures to their Room Leader or the Manager.

### Supporting documentation submitted

#### Infection Control:

Document titled 'Training Agreement' indicating staff intention to attend training on 27 January 2026.

Document titled 'Training evening – Staff Training Memo' dated 27 January 2026

### Summary Comment

The actions submitted if implemented should address the non-compliance.

## 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

The children were appropriately supervised at all times. This included when playing, eating and using the sanitary facilities.

## Part VIII - Notifications and Complaints

### Regulation 32 – Complaints

- (1) A registered provider shall ensure that the complaints policy of the service specifies-
- (a) the procedure to be followed by a person for the purposes of making a complaint in relation to the service,
  - (b) the manner in which such a complaint shall be dealt with, and
  - (c) the procedures for keeping a person who makes such a complaint informed of the manner in which it is being dealt with.
- (2) A registered provider shall ensure that-
- (a) a record in writing is kept of a complaint made to the provider in respect of the pre-school service, and
  - (b) the complaint is duly dealt with in accordance with the provider's complaints policy.
- (3) A record in writing referred to in paragraph (2)(a) shall-
- (a) include the nature of the complaint and the manner in which the complaint was dealt with, and
  - (b) be open to inspection on the premises by an authorised person.
- (4) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing referred to in paragraph (2)(a) is retained for a period of 2 years from the date on which the complaint has been dealt with.

### Compliance Information

- (1) (a), (b) & (c) The service had a complaints policy which specified the requirements of the regulation.
- (2) (a) & (b), (3) (a) & (b) & (4) The operations manager reported that the service had not received any complaints. Staff demonstrated an awareness of the procedures for managing complaints including record keeping as per the complaints policy.