

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015DL147
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Name of Service:	Wonder Years ECCE Ltd
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Address of Service:	Rossbracken, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal
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Eircode:	F92 TX99
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Name of Registered Provider:	Marcella McNamee
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	15/05/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	67	PM	61
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Donegal Early Years Inspectorate, St. Conal's Campus, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal. F92 TD92
Inspection undertaken by:	N Toner & S Kileen
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).

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Description of service

Wonder Years Childcare Centre is privately owned and has been in operation since 2002. The service is registered for the provision of a full day care service for pre-school children aged 0 - 6 year. A school age service is also provided. The service operates weekdays from 6:00am to 5.30pm and includes a sessional service from 9.00.am to 12.00pm. The service lies in the rural townland of Rossbracken, eight kilometres outside the Letterkenny, Co. Donegal. In the main building there are four care rooms on the ground floor and three care rooms on the first floor. There is a kitchen for preparing meals and snacks and the relevant ancillary facilities. The outdoor facilities consist of three garden and play area.

Staffing

There were 27 adults employed in the service, including the registered provider who was also the person in charge, the deputy person in charge, a cook and a cleaning staff. There are 22 adults employed to work directly with the preschool children. There were 20 adults in the service on the day of the inspection, a student was also present.

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

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The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9, 11, 15, 16(1)(h), 16(1)(i), & 16(1)(k), 19, 23, 25, 31 & 32.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulations 16(1)(h), 16(1)(i), & 16(1)(k). As a result, the scope of the inspection included all 7 care rooms.

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 deputy person in charge, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

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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) 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 deputy 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 on the 29th of May 2025, information available on inspection and discussion with the deputy person in charge it was determined that 10 new staff members had been employed since the previous inspection. A total of 10 files were reviewed. In addition, Garda vetting for 11 staff members were requested for review.

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- (a) Eight written, validated references were on file from past employers.
- (b) Twelve written, validated references were on file from reputable sources.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all 27 adults. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
- (d) International police vetting was available for one adult who had lived outside of the state for a period of six months or more.
- (4) Nine adults had attained major awards in Early childhood care and education at level 5 or above on the national framework of qualifications, 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 in all care rooms as follows:

In the morning session

- Little Smarties – Two staff cared for 8 children ranging from 1 years of age to 2 years of age.
- Clever Cats – Two staff cared for 8 children ranging from 2 years of age to 3 years of age.
- Junior Einstein's – Two staff cared for 9 children ranging from 2 years of age to 3 years of age.
- Little Scholars – Two staff cared for 9 children ranging from 2 years of age to 3 years of age.
- Kreative Kids – Two staff cared for 14 children ranging from 3 years of age to 4 years of age.

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- Tiny Tots – Three staff cared for 9 children aged 6 months old to 16 months old.
- Tommy Toddlers – Two staff cared for 10 children ranging from 1 years of age to 2 years of age.

In the afternoon session

- Little Smarties – Two staff cared for 7 children ranging from 1 years of age to 2 years of age.
- Clever Cats – Two staff cared for 7 children ranging from 2 years of age to 3 years of age.
- Junior Einstein's – Two staff cared for 8 children ranging from 2 years of age to 3 years of age.
- Little Scholars – Two staff cared for 9 children ranging from 2 years of age to 3 years of age.
- Kreative Kids – Two staff cared for 13 children ranging from 3 years of age to 4 years of age.
- Tiny Tots – Three staff cared for 7 children aged 6 months old to 16 months old.
- Tommy Toddlers – Two staff cared for 10 children ranging from 1 years of age to 2 years of age.

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.*

Compliance Information

- (1) On the day of inspection, a sample of 18 children's files were reviewed, a record in writing was held on file for the following.
- a) the name and date of birth of the child was available from 18 records.

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- b) the date on which the child first attended the service was available from 18 records reviewed.
- 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 was available from 18 records.
- e) authorisation for the collection of the child was available for all 18 records.
- 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 was available from 18 records.
- g) the name and telephone number of the child's registered medical practitioner was available from all 18 records.
- h) record of immunisations, if any, received by the child was available from 18 records.
- i) written parental consent for appropriate medical treatment of the child in the event of an emergency was available for all 18 records.

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:

- (h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis;*
- (i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;*
- (k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.*

Compliance Information

- (1)
- (h) A sample of attendance records were reviewed and contained all required information such as full name of the child, date of birth, time of arrival and departure from the preschool.
 - (i) The details of staff roster were reviewed. Staff start time, finish time, break times and cover for breaks was clear on the roster.
 - (k) A sample of 17 records were reviewed detailing any accidents, injuries or incidents involving a pre-school child attending the service. All records were signed by parents and staff.

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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
- (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

(1) (a)(b)

Basic Needs

There were adequate nutritional food and snacks supplied on the day of the inspection. The service had a three-week menu in place and on the day of inspection a balance and healthy selection of meals were available to the preschool children. Breakfast: Choice of cereal: cornflakes, wheat biscuit, multigrain hoops, rice crispies, special flakes. Snack: toast with jam/marmalade. Dinner: Chicken goujons, beans/curry and chips with potatoes for younger children and babies were offered chicken casserole. Evening snack: Platter of fresh fruit, ham, cheese and breadsticks. A supply of suitable crockery and cutlery was available to the children during meals. A drink station with individually labelled drinking cups were available to the preschool children throughout the session. Children were supported and encouraged to take responsibility for their personal care, in ways that match their individual level of independence. This included toileting, wiping their noses, dressing themselves for outdoor play and tidying away after work or play activities. The service fostered an understanding of healthy habits such as regular handwashing and using clean tissues when required. Staff were at hand to guide and support when necessary. Parents supplied spare clothes which were individually labelled in each child's room.

Physical and Material Environment

The playrooms were observed to be comfortable and inviting, providing a suitable and engaging space for preschool children. Child-sized tables and chairs were appropriately provided to support age-appropriate activities. A soft mat area was available for babies, enhanced with overhead lights and artwork affixed to the ceiling to stimulate visual engagement while lying down. Rooms also featured ball pit, and a variety of soft play equipment designed to encourage climbing and support gross motor development. A cozy library area was

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present, and staff were observed reading to the children after lunch and before rest time, promoting language development and a calm atmosphere.

Rooms had opportunities for all types of play including, imaginary, sensory, creative, challenging and opportunities for risk taking. Resources included home corners, construction areas, tuff trays, sand boxes, tables top activities, and puzzles for fine motor activities. There was easy access to the fully enclosed outside areas throughout the day. Children were observed in the outdoor play areas that run the perimeter of the main building, providing an alternative change of environment for them. Opportunities were provided for challenge and safe risk with climbing apparatus, hills, swings, and tyres. Children were observed engaging in energetic play in all the outdoor areas which were purposely designed to ensure that the children could be kept within sight and sound of the staff.

Free movement of the children was facilitated in the daily routine of the service. Short periods of adult initiated activities were interspersed with free play so that children could choose their own activity and move between the different interest areas in the room at their leisure. Children's need for rest was also appropriately accommodated in the care rooms. Rest areas were available in the older children's room with soft mapping and large cushions. There were designated sleep areas for the younger children.

Supporting Relationships

Children were offered a sense of belonging through the provision of individually named places for their personal belongings and by displays of artwork and photos of each child with their families. Children were enabled to engage positively with each other and were encouraged to be helpful, to take turns and share play resources with other children. Staff in the care rooms were attentive and caring in their approach and interacted well with the children. They were observed coming down to their eye level and kept up the flow of conversation with them throughout the session. Children were observed to be praised and encouraged as they engaged in different activities. Nappy changing was observed on the day of inspection to be a pleasurable experience with staff talking and singing to the younger children. Good teamwork was observed, staff worked well together, linking in with each other and ensuring information was documented. Good communication from staff was further observed when parents came to collect children from their care rooms. Information is also shared with parents via notice boards located outside each care room and in the main hall. A variety of information is available, including activities completed by the children, the most recent Tusla inspection report, staffing details, and a two-week menu. The Person in Charge informed the inspectors that parents are always welcome in the service. For example, the service is currently organising a teddy bears' picnic, which parents are invited to attend.

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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:

- Materials were observed to be in a good state of repair.
- Cleaning products, equipment and storage facilities were kept inaccessible and out of the reach of children.
- The outdoor area was secured with tall fencing and bolted gates.
- All toys and play equipment, both indoors and outdoors, were observed to be safe for the pre-school children using them and in a good state of repair.
- Window restrictors on the windows were present to prevent accidental falls.

Infection Control:

- There were adequate handwashing facilities available throughout the service, equipped with warm running water, liquid soap, and paper towels.
- Children were observed washing their hands regularly, including before snacks and meals, demonstrating good hygiene practices.
- Child-friendly handwashing posters with pictorial instructions were displayed above wash basins to support children's independence and understanding.
- The materials and resources throughout the service appeared to be visually clean.
- Cot and bed linens, including sheets and blankets, were laundered daily on-site.
- Soothers were stored hygienically in individual, clearly labelled containers for each child.
- Cleaning schedules were in place and maintained, staff were observed cleaning the care room after the children had finished their lunch.
- Warm running water was available for hand washing at a temperature below 43°C.
- Staff were observed to use appropriate infection control measures during nappy changes with disposable gloves and aprons and hand hygiene measures.

Administration of Medication:

- On discussion with staff in the pre-school rooms staff informed the inspector of a child on medication.

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Staff were aware of instructions and storage requirements of the medication. On review of the medication, it was stored in a restricted area and stored as per manufacturer's instructions.

- Medication administration records are kept by the service and were available on the day of inspection for review.
- Medication care plans were in place and reviewed on the day of inspection.

Safe Sleep:

- The service had four designated sleep rooms; each was equipped with appropriate cots to accommodate the needs of pre-school children.
- The service provided a dedicated sleep room for children who were developmentally ready to transition to a floor bed.
- The staff were observed on the day of inspection completing 10-minute checks on the younger children and logging the required information.
- Room temperature in the sleep rooms was kept at the appropriate level for each aged group of children. Using fans and opening of windows, enabling the air to circulate in the care rooms.

Fire Safety:

- A Fire Evacuation plan was displayed on the wall in each room.
- All exits remained free from obstruction on the day.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. On the day an external door leading to two of the care rooms was unsecure which posed a risk of unauthorised access to the service.
2. On the day of inspection, a suction-based anti-choking/airway clearance device was observed in the main hall, positioned directly beside the primary first aid box. These devices are not permitted to be used in preschool services. It is acknowledged that once brought to the attention of the person in charge it was removed.

Infection Control:

3. There were two broken foot operated bins in the Little Smarties room, one in the sanitary room and one in the nappy changing room. This could pose a risk of infection control for preschool children.

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Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. The keypad on the door was reset and fixed that same evening. Weekly checks on all doors are now completed by our maintenance
2. The device was removed immediately. All First aid items are checked monthly, updates from TUSLA on “non permitted” items will also be checked during these checks to ensure future compliance

Infection Control:

3. Bins were removed and replaced with new ones. Educators are reminded to check functionality of all bins during their weekly risk assessments and report any malfunctions to ensure compliance

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

Photographic evidence was submitted to the inspectorate.

Infection Control:

Photographic evidence was submitted to the inspectorate.

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventive actions submitted by the registered provider adequately address the non-compliance found on inspection under regulation 23. This regulation is now complaint.

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 service demonstrated that an adequate number of staff held in date First Aid Responder (FAR) training and were always available to the children while in the service.

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(2) (a) (b) A fully stocked first aid box was stored in a conspicuous location in the service and available to the children as required.

Part VIII - Notifications and Complaints

Regulation 31 - Notification of incidents

A registered provider shall notify the Agency in writing within 3 working days of becoming aware of any of the following incidents occurring in the preschool service:

- (a) the death of a pre-school child while attending the service, including the death of a child in hospital following his or her transfer to hospital from the service;*
- (b) the diagnosis of a pre-school child attending the service, an employee, unpaid worker, contractor or other person working in the service as suffering from an infectious disease within the meaning of the Infectious Diseases Regulations 1981 (S.I. No. 390 of 1981);*
- (c) an incident that occurs in the service and that results in the service being closed for any length of time;*
- (d) a serious injury to a pre-school child while attending the service that requires immediate medical treatment by a registered medical practitioner whether in a hospital or otherwise;*
- (e) an incident in respect of which a pre-school child attending the service goes missing while attending the service.*

Compliance Information

(a-e) The person in charge confirmed that there had been no notification to Tusla since the last inspection. The person in charge is aware of the regulatory requirement to notify Tusla of any incident in relation to (a-e) within the required time frame.

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.*

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(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 person in charge demonstrated that they had a complaints policy in place which outlined the procedure for making a complaint and the way the complaint would be dealt with. The complaints policy does outline that the way the complainant will be kept informed of the progress of their complaint.

(2) (a)(b)

The person in charge confirmed that no complaints have been received by the service since the last inspection.

(4) The person in charge is aware of the statutory requirement to retain records of complaints for two years as set out in regulation.