

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2018DS505
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Name of Service:	Once Upon A Time
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Address of Service:	Ballymount Retail Centre, Ballymount Little, Ballymount, Dublin 24, Co. Dublin
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Eircode:	D24 H5NP
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Name of Registered Provider:	AnneMarie McCormack, David McCormack
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Service type:	Full Day
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Date of Inspection:	22/06/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	69	PM	66
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Tusla Child and Family Agency First Floor Trinity Building IDA Business Park Southern Cross Road Bray Co. Wicklow
Inspection undertaken by:	H. Bourke and R. Brien
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

Once Upon a Time Ballymount is a privately owned full day care service that was first established in 2018. The service is registered to provide care and education on Full Day Care basis, for children aged between one to six years of age.

The hours of operation are from 7.30am until 6.30pm, Monday to Friday. The service is located on the ground floor of an adapted premises located in Ballymount retail business park, Dublin 24. There are five care rooms: Wobbler room 1, Wobbler room 2, Toddler room, Pre-Montessori and Montessori room.

A separate sleep room is provided. An outdoor play area is available to the rear of the premises.

Staffing

There are 18 adults employed in the pre-school service, this includes one domestic staff member. Sixteen adults, including the person in charge plus three managers were present on the day of inspection.

Twelve adults were rostered to work directly with the children attending the service with two adults rostered to support in rooms when needed.

The three managers were on site when the inspectors arrived at the service and all managers were named on the duty roster.

The registered providers do not work directly with the children and were not present on the day of 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

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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.

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

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 9 – Management and recruitment

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that-

- (a) the service has a designated person in charge and a named person who is able to deputise as required,*
- (b) at all times during the period when the pre-school service is being carried on, the designated person in charge or the named person referred to in subparagraph (a) is on the premises, and*
- (c) there is a clear management structure in the service that identifies the lines of authority and accountability in the service and the specific roles and responsibilities of each employee and unpaid worker.*

(2) A registered provider shall ensure that each employee, unpaid worker and contractor is suitable and competent taking into consideration the nature of the needs of children, including by-

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- (a) consideration of references from the person's past employers, if any, and in particular the most recent employer, if any,*
- (b) consideration of references from reputable sources in the case of a person who has no past employers,*
- (c) consideration of the vetting disclosure received from the National Vetting Bureau of the Garda Síochána in accordance with the Act of 2012 in respect of the person, and*
- (d) ensuring, insofar as is practicable, that where a person has lived in a state other than the State for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months, he or she provides police vetting from the police authorities in that state*
- (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

Following a discussion with the operations manager and inspecting the staff roster it was confirmed that 18 adults are employed in the service. The adults employed include a domestic staff. On the day of inspection three managers were present and a total of 21 files were reviewed.

(1)(a)

The person in charge was present when the inspectors arrived. There was a named person who was able to deputise as required.

(b)

The person in charge was on the premises at the time of the arrival of the inspectors and remained on the premises for the duration of the inspection.

(c)

There was a clear management structure within the service.

(2)(a)(b)

Written validated references were available in respect of 21 adults.

(c)

The required three-year Garda Vetting Disclosures were available for 21 adults.

(d)

International police vetting was available for 11 adults working in the service who had lived outside the jurisdiction for more than six consecutive months as an adult.

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(4)

Twenty staff members held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 or higher on the National Framework of Qualifications or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

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)

Throughout the inspection there were an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the pre-school service.

(2)

The correct adult/child ratio was maintained at all times. There were 15 adults employed to work directly with 69 children on the day of inspection.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 17 – Information for parents

A registered provider shall ensure that a parent or guardian of a child proposing to attend the service is provided with the information referred to in subparagraphs (a) to (g) of Regulation 16(1).

Compliance Information

The person in charge was able to demonstrate that they provided all relevant information to parents referred to in subparagraphs (a) to (g) of regulation 16 (1) of a child proposing to attend the service.

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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,

Compliance Information

(1)(a)

BASIC NEEDS

- There was a healthy eating policy in place. Adults sat with the children during their snacks and lunch and conversation was encouraged. Children were given plenty of time to eat their food in a relaxed and unhurried environment.
- Children were supported and encouraged to be independent with using the toilet but were supervised appropriately. Children were also encouraged to take care of their belongings and to clean up after having their snacks and lunch.
- Nappy changing was carried out at regular intervals and any additional needs were attended to by the adults in the care room. Hand washing following toileting was observed.
- Children were given opportunities to make choices as to which activities they wished to pursue and were supported in their choice by the staff members.
- Children had access to an outdoor area for play.
- In addition to low level beds and cots to meet the needs of children who required sleep, there was a cosy area in all care rooms for children to use during their day.

SUPPORTING RELATIONSHIPS AROUND CHILDREN:

- The adults demonstrated warmth towards the children through language and interaction and children's choices were respected. Adults spoke to the children directly, addressing them using their names.
- Children's behaviour was managed in a competent and positive way with minor problems handled promptly.
- Children's parents were spoken to directly at the end of the day to discuss how their child was during the day and any issues that might have arisen.
- Adults knelt to the level of the children when speaking to them individually.

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PHYSICAL AND MATERIAL ENVIRONMENT:

- The pre-school rooms were maintained at a comfortable temperature between 18°C-22°C throughout the inspection.
- Low level tables and chairs were provided for all children to use. Laid out round the care rooms there were shelving to store toys and materials, all items stored were visible and accessible to the children.
- There were materials and toys available to promote fine motor, cognitive and language development including books, painting, craft making, water play as well as Montessori equipment, building blocks and a play kitchen.
- There was an outdoor area to the rear of the premises, which all children in the service had supervised access to on a daily basis.
- The outdoor area was safe and secure.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 22 – Food and drink

A registered provider shall ensure that adequate and suitable, nutritious and varied food and drink is available for each pre-school child attending the pre-school service.

Compliance Information

On the day of inspection, in the morning time, a snack of crackers, cream cheese and diced cucumber was given to the children. There was extra food for the children who wanted it. A hot meal was served at lunchtime of beef ragu and potatoes. Alternative food was offered to children who did not want to have the hot meal, and again additional food was available to all children who wanted more.

Children had access to fresh drinking water throughout their day.

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 door to the pre-school was securely locked on arrival of the inspectors to the service.

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- All toys examined were in good condition and equipment was suitable, age appropriate and in good working order.
- The kitchen area was inaccessible to the children.
- Documentary evidence was available of daily risk assessments being carried out in the service.
- All cleaning products were stored safely out of the reach of children.
- The emergency exit route from each playgroup room was free from obstruction and clearly marked.
- The outdoor area was suitable, safe and secure.
- A head count of children was carried out before and after the children went to the outdoor area to play and on their return to the care room.

Infection Control:

- There were sanitary areas located in the pre-school service. There was warm running water at 30°C, liquid soap and paper towels available.
- A foot pedal bin was available in each sanitary area and in each of the pre-school rooms for the safe disposal of used paper towels and other waste matter.
- Table cleaning was observed before and after snack time.
- Hand washing by the adults and children was observed before snacks, after using the toilet and outdoor play.
- A cleaning schedule was present and maintained in the service.

Administration of Medication:

While no medication was administered on the day of inspection, there were records in place to demonstrate that medication has been correctly administered and recorded by staff in the pre-school. Care plans were in place for children who had known allergies, in addition to in date medication. All staff were aware of the care plans and what their responsibilities were in recognising signs and symptoms and how to administer medication if required.

Safe Sleep:

The sleep needs of the children in the one to two years age group were child led and there was also a designated time for sleep after lunch. Children aged one to two years slept in cots in the designated sleep room within the service. Children over two years of age slept on low level beds in their care rooms.

The service had an adequate number of cots to accommodate the age profile of the children who required cots for safe sleep and low-level beds to accommodate the children who no longer slept in cots.

Children who did not wish to sleep were accommodated in a different care room during sleep time.

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Ten-minute sleep records were maintained for all sleeping children, colour, breathing and position was documented in line with safe sleep guidelines.

Fire Safety:

There were records of quarterly and annual testing of the smoke detection system and annual testing of fire extinguishers in the service. The last recorded dates were 2 January 2026 and 13 January 2026 respectively.