

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CE023
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Name of Service:	Wonder Years Creche
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Address of Service:	Drumquin, Ballynacally, Ennis, Co. Clare
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Eircode:	V95 VK25
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Name of Registered Provider:	Anna Hehir
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	12/08/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	26	PM	26
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate Tusla Child and Family Agency Primary Care Centre Station Road Ennis County Clare
Inspection undertaken by:	J Hayes
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).

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Description of service

Wonder Years Creche was established in 1994, in Ballynacally, Ennis, County Clare. The service is located within two spacious care rooms in a single storey building adjacent to the registered providers residence.

Enclosed outdoor play areas are located to the front, side and rear of the building. The programme of care and education is facilitated Monday to Friday from 07:30 to 18:00 on a full day, part-time or sessional basis for children ranging in age from six months to six years.

Staffing

Eight adults are employed by the service. On the 12 August 2026, the service manager assisted by four adults cared for the children in attendance. An adult was also available for kitchen and cleaning duties. The registered provider does not work in the service but was present for a brief period on 12 August 2026. The adults held evidence of engagement in continuous professional development.

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 and safety. The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations:

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Regulation 9 – Management and recruitment (1)(a)(b), (2)(a)(b)(c)(d) and (4)

Regulation 11 - Staffing levels (1) (2) (8)(a)

Regulation 19 - Health, welfare and development of child (1)(a)

Regulation 29 – Premises (a)(b)(c)(d)(e)

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.

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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

(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)

The manager was the person in charge and a person was available to deputise in their absence.

(b)

The manager and a named person to deputise was available at all times during the inspection.

(2)

Nine files were available in respect of the registered provider and the adults working in the service. The findings included the following:

(a)

Twelve written and validated written references from past employers were available.

(b)

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Six written and validated references were available from a source other than a past employer.

(c)

Garda vetting disclosures were available in respect of the registered provider and the eight adults. The service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d)

International police vetting was not required as no adult working in the service had lived in another state for a period of longer than six consecutive months.

(4)

Seven adults working directly with the children held Early Childhood Care and Education qualifications ranging from Level 5 to Level 8 on the National Framework of Qualifications.

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,

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Compliance Information

- (1)
An adequate number of adults worked directly with the children in attendance.
- (2)
On the 12 August 2026, the ratio of adults caring for children was maintained in the care rooms. Five adults cared for the twenty-six children attending the service in the morning and five adults cared for twenty-six children in the afternoon.
- (8)(a)
During the inspection more than two adults were available on the premises at all times.

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)
- Supporting Relationships around Children:**
- The pre-school children's learning, development and well-being was supported by the adults working within the service as follows:
- The adults interacted with the children in a kind and caring manner. Positive behavioural strategies were used during interactions with the children. The adults responded promptly to the children's cues for assistance and comfort, conversed at their level and listened attentively during conversations.
- The adults demonstrated an understanding of the children's individual preferences and capabilities. The transitions in the changes of activities and environments in each room were facilitated with ease. The adults notified the children in advance of any change in the programme of activities. Visual aids and communication systems were used in the service to ensure children were familiar with transitions throughout the day and the roles and responsibilities were clear for the older children. The children transitioned from the enriching indoor to the outdoor environments at various stages throughout the day. Opportunities were provided for children to meet their siblings during the day. The children initiated open ended child-led play-based activities.

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The older children were encouraged to be independent while caring for their personal belongings, using the toilet, participation in tasks and tidy up time. The children's cues for sleep were responded to in a prompt and calm manner. The children engaged in open ended creative, pretend and sensory play and dance. Speech sounds and language development was promoted by the adults through repetition and songs and rhymes. The upcoming transition to national school was supported through opportunities to dress up in school uniforms and view photographs of the school classroom.

The children sat together during mealtime and conversed amicably together in a relaxed and unhurried manner. Individual learning journals were available for the children demonstrating the children's progress and creative work, these are completed each year and sent home to parents/guardians. The service policies and procedures are shared with parents/guardians of children attending. An informal communication approach was observed during interactions with parent/guardians at drop off and collection. Information notices and photographs of activities are placed on windows for parents/guardians to view. A telephone messaging system is used for daily updates.

A strong ethos of teamwork between the adults in each room was observed during the facilitation of the programme of care and learning.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-

- (a) of sound and stable structure,*
- (b) safe and secure,*
- (c) kept adequately lit, heated and ventilated*
- (d) cleaned, maintained and repaired, as required, and*
- (e) equipped with adequate and suitable sanitary facilities.*

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Compliance Information

- (a)
The service appeared to be very well maintained with no visible defects.
- (b)
The service is secured by a key coded access system and all entry of visitors into the service is managed by the person in charge and recorded in a visitors book. The adults are available to ensure the safe entry and exit of the children to and from the childcare facility. The outdoor play areas were secured with fencing and gates to protect the children within. The children's arrival and departure times were recorded on a daily basis. A completed risk assessment was available demonstrating measures taken by service to reduce risk.
- (c)
All areas within the service were well lit with natural and artificial lighting and natural ventilation was provided throughout. All playroom temperatures were maintained within an appropriate range of 18°C to 22°C
- (d)
The service was maintained in a clean and hygienic condition. Completed cleaning schedules were in place throughout the premises and a dedicated person was employed for the purpose of cleaning the premises.
- (e)
An adequate number of children's and adult's sanitary facilities were available in the service. The service accommodates three children's toilets, one adult's toilet and one nappy changing area. The sanitary facilities were equipped with warm running water, liquid soap, hand paper towels and lidded, lined pedal operated bins.