

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015GY152				
Name of Service:	Little Wonders Creche & Montessori				
Address of Service:	Eden Lodge, Clybaun Road, Knocknacarra, Co. Galway				
Eircode:	H91 XA39				
Name of Registered Provider:	Monica Keenan				
Service type:	Full Day				
Date of Inspection:	12/08/2026				
No of pre-school children:	<table> <tr> <td>AM</td> <td>24</td> <td>PM</td> <td>21</td> </tr> </table>	AM	24	PM	21
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Quality and Regulation Directorate, Clinical & Administration Building, Block A - (1st Floor- Green Corridor), Merlin Park Hospital, Galway.
Inspection undertaken by:	E. Friel
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).

Description of service

Little Wonders Creche and Montessori is a private service in operation since 2007. It offers early years care and education to children on a full time, part-time and sessional basis. The service accommodates children from 1 to 6 years of age and opening hours are from 08:00 until 18:00, 51 weeks of the year. The Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme operates within these hours from 09:00 until 12:00 and is available for 38 weeks of the year. A school age service is available in the afternoon from 13:30 until 18:00. The secure outdoor play areas are located at the rear and side of the service. Car parking is available in a designated area at the front of the building. The service is located in the urban, residential, area of Knocknacarra in Galway city. It operates from a single storey, purpose built childcare facility adjacent to the registered provider's home. There were 2 care rooms in operation with 3 groups of children; namely Montessori operating from a single care room and Junior ECCE and Toddlers in a divided care room. Adult and children's sanitary facilities were available, along with a kitchen where food is stored and prepared and a designated sleep room.

Staffing

The service currently employs nine adults, seven of whom were working on the day of inspection including the registered provider and the administrator.

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 area of governance, health, welfare and development of child and safety. 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 inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, manager, 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.*

(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,*
- (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 registered provider was the designated person in charge and there was a manager available to deputise in the service as required.
- (b) The person in charge was on the premises when the early years inspector arrived and remained on site for the duration of the inspection. The registered provider assisted with the administrative requirements of the inspection, provided cover in the care rooms during breaks and cooked the hot food served during the day. Documentary evidence in the form of a staff roster indicated that either the designated person in charge or manager were available, on the premises, when early years children were present.
- (2) Recruitment files and the staff roster indicated that there were two adults employed since the last inspection on 21 July 2025. Therefore, these two files were reviewed. In addition, garda vetting for five existing adults whose garda vetting required renewal were also reviewed.
- (a) All four validated references were from previous employers.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures from the National Vetting Bureau were available for the two new adults. In addition, garda vetting renewal disclosures were on file for the five existing adults for whom they were required demonstrating compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew garda vetting every three years.
- (d) International police vetting was available for the two new adults employed in the service who had lived in another State for a period longer than six months as adults.
- (4) The two adults employed to work directly with the children attending the service held at least a major award in Early childhood Care and Education at Level 7 on the National Qualifications Framework.

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) The registered provider ensured that an adequate number of adults were working directly with the early years children while they were present in the service.

(2) Documentary evidence in the form of the staff roster indicated that adult child ratios were met. There were 6 adults working directly with 24 early years children in the morning and 6 adults working with 21 children in the afternoon.

(8)

(a) The registered provider ensured that there were at least two adults on the premises while the children were attending the service.

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

Basic needs:

- The food requirements for a full day care service- that at least two meals and two snacks, one of which must be a hot meal were provided by both the service and the parents/guardians. Staff stated that breakfast was served from 08:15 and consisted of cereals.
- Morning snack provided by the parents/guardians was served at 10:30 and the hot meal during the day of chilli con carne and rice, cooked in the service, was observed being served in the Montessori care room at 12:30. Children in the Toddler care room were observed eating snack at 14:00 consisting of bite sized pieces of fruit, crackers and cheese prepared by the parents/guardians and a further snack was available in the evening for children availing of full day care.
- Water was readily available and easily accessible both indoors and in the outdoor play areas. Children who were thirsty and required additional water were observed filling their bottles independently in the Montessori care room.
- Children in the Montessori care room had a spare change of clothing in the event of an accident or changeable weather ensuring the comfort of the children.
- All the children were observed in the outdoor play areas throughout the day where they had room to move freely and had access to age and stage appropriate toys and resources.

Supporting children's relationships:

- Staff interactions were noted to be warm and caring. Two adults in the outdoor play area were observed listening and responding to children's requests which included playing a game of "Mr Wolf" in the outdoor play area. The children were encouraged to stay within the rules of the games by the adults and to be mindful of the feelings of others.
- During tabletop activities and floor play the adults were heard engaging positively with the children. Examples included adults heard praising and encouraging children to complete activities in the groups.
- Staff stated that communication with parents was at drop off and collection. Staff were observed chatting to parents/guardians at pick up at the service entrance.

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 outdoor areas were separated into age and stage appropriate groups. Secure metal gates ensured the safety of the children in these areas during outdoor play.
- The perimeter of the outdoor area to the front of the service was secured with high metal fencing ensuring that unauthorised adults cannot enter the area or that children can leave the area unsupervised.
- A handrail was in place from the Montessori care room to the outdoor area facilitating all children to navigate safely by providing stability and support from the care room to the outdoor area.

Infection Control:

- Hand basins in use by adults and children were fitted with thermostatically controlled hot water, between 18.5°C and 25.1°C, dispensing hand soap and paper rolls were available. Pedal operated bins were available for the disposal of paper waste.
- Handwashing was observed coming in from outdoor play, before consuming food and after toileting preventing the spread of germs.
- Disposable gloves and aprons were available for nappy changing in line with the service's nappy changing policy. Cleaning agents were visible to sanitise the mat and area after use preventing cross contamination.
- Windows in all care rooms were open aiding the circulation of fresh air.
- Cleaning schedules were noted to be kept up to date; adults were observed sanitising the tables before and after eating food and sweeping the floors ensuring areas were kept clean and hygienic.
- Perishable food was stored in the service fridge preventing the food from spoiling.

Administration of Medication:

- No medication was observed being administered during the inspection.
- Temperature reducing medications, stored in original containers with expiry dates of 08/26 and 09/26, were available in the event of an emergency. These were stored out of reach of the children on a high shelf in the kitchen.

Safe Sleep:

- There was ambient lighting available from a viewing window in the care room providing light to enable staff to complete the physical sleep checks in the sleep room and to walk around the sleep equipment safely.

- Sleep room temperatures were recorded under 22° within the parameters of required temperatures of 18°C-22° for children aged over 12 months.
- Ten-minute sleep checks were furnished to the inspector for one child asleep in the designated sleep room. These contained the required details including each child's sleep position, colour, breathing, room temperature and the adult who recorded the sleep check.

Fire Safety:

- All fire exits were unobstructed enabling the quick evacuation of the children and adults in the event of an emergency.
- The fire assembly point was visible in the outdoor play area, a safe distance from the service.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

The following posed a risk of tipping or falling on top of sleeping children.

1. Four stackable beds in the Toddler care room were stacked diagonally next to a sleeping child.
2. Sheets and blankets were stacked precariously on top of a tall plastic toy. Staff stated that there was no storage equipment available in the sleep room for storing individual laundry for each child.

Infection Control:

3. The pedal on the pedal operated bin in the Montessori sanitary area was broken, posing a risk of cross contamination from the number of children and adults coming into contact with the lid.
4. Four mats in use in the Montessori and Toddler care rooms were frayed at the corners making them difficult to clean.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

The following statements were received from the registered provider;

General Safety:

1. The four stackable beds in the Toddler care room have been placed horizontally on the floor to ensure the safety of the children in the sleep room. Staff have been informed that the beds are not to be stacked while the children are asleep.
2. The sheets and blankets have been placed in a storage box in a separate room. Notices have been posted to state that bedding is stored in a separate room.

Infection Control:

3. The bins have all been replaced. Staff will inform management if the bins are broken.
4. The mats have been removed and alternatives are being sourced.

Supporting documentation submitted

The following photographic evidence was received in the office of the inspectorate from the registered provider;

General Safety:

1. The stackable beds placed on the floor, individually, while not in use.
2. Sheets and blankets in the box stored in a separate room.

Infection Control:

3. New bins in place in the service.
4. Soft furnishings in place in both the Montessori and Toddler care rooms to replace the mats which were removed from the areas.

Summary Comment

The actions taken and evidence submitted by the registered provider have addressed the non-compliances identified under Regulation 23 on inspection.

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) Certificates were available and the staff roster evidenced that a person trained as a First Aid Responder was available while the early years children were on the premises.
- (2)
- (a) (b) The first aid boxes were easily accessible to the adults in the care rooms and in the kitchen area of the service while the children were in attendance. There were sufficient in date supplies of first aid equipment available.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 26 - Fire safety measures

- (1) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of-*

- (a) any fire drill that takes place in the premises, and
- (b) the number, type and maintenance record of firefighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises.
- (4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of fire shall be displayed in a conspicuous position in the premises.

Compliance Information

- (1)
- (a) A written record was available of the monthly fire drills completed in the service. The last fire drill was conducted on the 30 June 2026 and previous drills were noted to have been carried monthly.
- (4) The notices of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire were displayed and visible in each care room ensuring staff were aware of their roles and responsibilities in the event of an emergency.

Non-Compliance Information

- (1)
- (b) There were no recent records available of the number, type and maintenance record of fire fighting equipment and smoke alarms on the premises. The dates of the previous records indicated that the last service was carried out on the firefighting equipment on March 2025 and on the smoke alarm on February 2025, posing a risk of equipment failure in the event of an emergency.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The following statement was received from the registered provider;

- (1)
- (b) Both the smoke alarm and the firefighting equipment have been serviced. These have been added to the yearly calendar to ensure compliance and that they are completed in a timely manner.

Supporting documentation submitted

The following documents were received;

- (1)
- (b) A fire alarm certificate dated 01/09/2026 and a smoke alarm certificate dated 27/08/2026.

Summary Comment

The actions taken and evidence submitted by the registered provider have addressed the non-compliance identified under Regulation 26 (1)(b).

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

A registered provider shall ensure that the pre-school service is adequately insured.

Compliance Information

A certificate was furnished to the inspection which evidenced that the service was insured for the number of children and type of service in operation. The expiry date was noted to be 27 March 2027.