

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2024DS005
--------------------------	-------------

Name of Service:	Once Upon a Time
-------------------------	------------------

Address of Service:	The Oaks, The View. Barnoaks Citywest, Dublin 24, Co. Dublin
----------------------------	--

Eircode:	
-----------------	--

Name of Registered Provider:	David McCormack, AnneMarie McCormack
-------------------------------------	--------------------------------------

Service type:	Full Day
----------------------	----------

Date of Inspection:	29/06/2026
----------------------------	------------

No of pre-school children:	AM	91	PM	94
-----------------------------------	----	----	----	----

Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	The Brunel Building, Heuston South Quarter, St John's Road West, Dublin 8.
Inspection undertaken by:	S. Early O'Brien, R. Phillips & E. Mulhern
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).

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Description of service

Once Upon a Time, located in Citywest, south Dublin is 1 of 11 private full day care services operated by the registered providers. The service accommodates children aged 1-6 years from 07:30 to 18:30, Monday to Friday in a purposely adapted two story building. 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 29 staff which includes the management team and kitchen staff. There are 20 staff members employed to work directly with the children. The area manager was in charge of the service with 16 staff, and an assistant manager working directly with the children when the inspectors arrived at the service. After the inspector's arrival, two adults were transferred to work in the service from two of the registered providers other services. An operations manager, support manager and training manager, employed by the registered provider included on the staff roster, arrived at the service and worked with the children during the inspection across all care rooms.

The registered providers do not work directly in the service and were not present 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

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under the following regulations:

Regulation 9 (1)(a)(b)(2)(3)(4) - Management and recruitment

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

Regulation 16 (1)(h)(i)(j)(k) - Record in relation to pre-school service

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

Regulation 23 - Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child

Regulation 25 – First Aid

Regulation 26 – Fire Safety Measures

However, on inspection additional non-compliance which posed a risk was identified under Regulation 31 – Notification of Incidents. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulation within this report.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 16(1) - Record in relation to pre-school service across each of the eight care rooms of the Wobbler 1, Wobbler 2, Wobbler 3, Toddler 1, Toddler 2, Toddler 3, Pre-Montessori and Montessori.

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.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Acknowledgments

The inspectors wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the person in charge, management, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

Statutory Notices

Notice	Date Served	Detail
Immediate Action Notice IAN3641	29/06/2026	A garda vetting disclosure was not available for one staff member who commenced employment in the service on 15 June 2026.
Status	Action was taken immediately by the operations manager following service of the Notice and the operations manager submitted a written response with detailed corrective and preventive actions which were accepted by the Inspectorate.	

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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.

Compliance Information

(1)

(a) The service manager is the designated person in charge of the service and there is a named person appointed to deputise as required.

(b) The area manager was present and in charge of the service throughout the inspection.

(2)

Upon review of the staff roster and staff files, it was identified that there were 16 new staff members employed to work in the service since the last inspection on 04 November 2025. Thirty-one staff files were reviewed in relation to regulation 9(2)(c).

Documentation was reviewed in respect of 16 adults and met regulatory requirements as follows:

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

- (a) Of the 32 validated, written references that were required, 30 were available from a past employer.
- (b) Of the 32 validated, written references that were required, 2 were available from a source other than a past employer.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures were required for 31 adults and 30 of these had been obtained and were on file, demonstrating that the registered provider has adhered to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years for all staff.
- (d) Police vetting was required and available for 13 staff members who had lived outside of the State for a period of more than six months as an adult.
- (4)
- Of the 16 records required, 15 were available demonstrating that the adults employed since the last inspection held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 or above on the National Framework of Qualifications.

Non-Compliance Information

- (2)
- (c) See Statutory Notice section in relation to Immediate Action Notice IAN3641 served.
- (3)
- One of the references referred to in paragraph (2) was validated after the adult had commenced working in the service. The staff member commenced employment on 05 January 2026 and the reference was validated on 21 January 2026.
- (4)
- There was no evidence available to demonstrate that one adult who was employed to work directly with the children in the service held a relevant major award in Early Childhood Care and Education on the National Framework of Qualifications or equivalent.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

- (3)
- The Recruitment Manager has been retrained and instructed to ensure that all reference check documentation is fully completed, accurate and contains all required information before being placed on an employee's staff file. The relevant documentation has been reviewed and corrected where required.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

The Operations Manager will complete monthly spot checks of staff recruitment files to ensure that reference checks and all associated recruitment documentation are complete and accurate. The Recruitment Manager will also complete a final review of all recruitment documentation before it is placed on the staff file. Any discrepancies identified during the monthly checks will be corrected immediately and further guidance or retraining will be provided where required.

(4)

Immediate action was implemented and the staff member removed from the premises the same day. The staff member has trained in Early Years care and is currently awaiting an additional DCYA qualification recognition letter in respect of a higher-level qualification. The Centre Manager and Operations Manager will also carry out spot checks of staff files that the Recruitment Manager submits before each staff member's start date.

Supporting documentation submitted

(4)

Immediate Action response previously submitted.

Summary Comment

The inspectorate has deemed that the actions submitted adequately address the non-compliance and will inform the next inspection.

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,

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Compliance Information

(1)

An adequate number of adults were working directly with the children during the inspection.

(2)

The minimum ratio of adults to children for full-time care was adhered to during the inspection. On the morning of inspection there were 24 adults working directly with 91 children attending the service and 23 adults working directly with 94 children on the afternoon of inspection.

8(a)

There was a minimum of two adults on the premises at all times during the inspection evidenced in the staff roster available on the day of inspection.

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;

(j) details of any medication administered to a pre-school child attending the service with signed parental consent;

(k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.

Compliance Information

(1)

(h) Children's attendance was recorded on an online application on the day of inspection. These records included details of each child's arrival and departure times from the service.

(i) A record of the staff roster was available and was reflective of the staff present on the day.

(j) Eleven administration of medication records were reviewed in hard copy and all were completed as required by the regulation.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

(k) Eleven accident and incident records were reviewed in hard copy, and all were completed as required by the regulation.

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.

Compliance Information

Meals were served at regular intervals throughout the day of inspection and drinking water was available in each care room. During meals the staff members sat at the table and engaged in social conversation with the children, promoting a relaxed atmosphere. Morning snack in the Wobbler 1 room at 11:00 comprised of a wrap with cheese and turkey, rice cakes and bananas. Alternative options and extra portions were available if required. The staff members sat at the children's level when feeding the younger children or when assisting the children to feed themselves. Staff placed bibs on younger children and cleaned their hands and faces after their meal and their noses as needed. In the Toddler 1 room at 11:53, two children requested more food and were provided with a wrap and a banana which they had asked for.

The staff members demonstrated warmth and sensitivity in their interactions with the children. For example, the staff members in the Wobbler 3 room communicated positively with the children using soft and gentle tones, offered reassurance by sitting near them on the floor as they explored and promptly comforted any child if they became upset. One child in the Wobbler 1 room had commenced attending the service on the day of inspection. As this child was visibly upset additional support and comfort was provided promptly at times during the morning, with cuddles and reassuring words.

Staff advised that new children begin with short days, leading into longer days over a settling-in period.

In Toddler 1 and Toddler 2 rooms staff supported children to engage positively with one another and the children were encouraged to interact in play activities that required turn taking and sharing. Staff members were heard encouraging children to be mindful of the feelings of those around them which promoted an ethos of friendship and working together.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

The individual sleep needs of younger children were met, and this was observed on the day of inspection whereby one child who showed visible signs of tiredness in the Wobbler 1 room was offered sleep outside of the designated sleep time. In the younger care rooms, children were familiar with the routine of sleep and where their individual floorbeds were located. Children were prepared for bed with outer clothing removed, soothers provided to children who required them and cellular blankets for comfort.

For children who did not require sleep, appropriate rest facilities were available in the care rooms and children were observed spending time in this area for short periods of rest throughout the day as observed in the Pre-Montessori room where two children appeared relaxed and content in the cosy area reading books.

A fully enclosed outdoor play area was located on the second floor of the premises and had shock absorbent surfacing. Children were provided with the opportunity to play outdoors and were dressed appropriately to the weather with staff observed to apply sunscreen to children in the Pre-Montessori room and provide drinking water in children's own water bottles and beakers which were brought outside.

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 entrance door to the service was adequately secured to ensure the safety of the children within and to avoid unauthorised persons accessing the service or children exiting unsupervised.
- The toys and play equipment observed in use by the children on the day of inspection appeared in good working order.
- Cleaning agents and medicines were stored safely out of reach of children.
- All storage facilities were inaccessible to children.

Infection Control:

- Liquid soap, warm water and paper towels were available to facilitate hand washing. Staff and children were observed to carry out hand washing as appropriate.
- Waste was managed appropriately with the use of pedal bins.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

- A system was in place for effective sterilisation of soothers and mouthed toys.
- All cot mattresses in use had waterproof covers.

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 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.

Safe Sleep:

- Children were physically monitored while sleeping and sleep checks were carried out and documented every 10 minutes. Discussion with staff demonstrated that staff were familiar with safe sleep guidelines.
- An adult remained in the room at all times where children were sleeping on low beds.

Fire Safety:

- All fire exits were clear of obstruction.

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)

A person trained in first aid was immediately available to the children at all times on the day of inspection.

(2)

(a) A first aid box was safely stored in an easily accessible and conspicuous location within the service.

(b) A first aid box was available to the adults and children in the service at all times

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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 fire fighting 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)

There was evidence of regular fire drills having taken place within the service. The last fire drill took place on 16 June 2026.

(b)

There was a maintenance record of the firefighting equipment and smoke detection system in the premises dated August 2025 and June 2026 respectively.

(4)

There was a notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire, displayed within the care rooms and the main hallway of the service

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report Pre School

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:

(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.

Non-Compliance Information

(d)

The registered provider had not submitted a Notification of Incident form to the Agency within 3 working days, following a documented incident on 19 January 2026 where a child required medical treatment following a medical emergency in the service.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

All members of the management team have been retrained on the requirements of Regulation 31 – Notification of Incidents, including the categories of incidents that require notification to Tusla and the applicable notification timeframes.

A central escalation and monitoring process has been implemented. Any incident where a child requires medical attention, or where there is any uncertainty as to whether an incident is notifiable, must be escalated immediately to the Operations Manager and Area Manager.

The Operations Manager will review the incident against the requirements of Regulation 31 and ensure that any required notification is submitted to Tusla within the 72 hour timeframe. The Area Manager will follow up to verify that the notification has been completed and appropriately recorded.

Supporting documentation submitted

No documentary evidence has been submitted.

Summary Comment

The inspectorate has deemed that the actions submitted adequately address the non-compliance and will inform the next inspection.