

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CC154
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Name of Service:	First Steps Creche
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Address of Service:	4 Marrick, Halycon Drive, Silversprings, Co Cork
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Eircode:	T23 RY89
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Name of Registered Provider:	Rosaleen Cotter
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	01/10/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	16	PM	17
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Tusla Early Years Inspectorate, 13 Market Square, Mallow, Co Cork, P51 DD5Y
Inspection undertaken by:	N O'Donoghue & J Dennehy
Title:	Early Years Inspector & Inspection Registration Manager

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).

Conditions if applicable	N/A
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Description of service

First Steps Creche is a privately owned full day care service in operation since 2002. It is registered to accommodate children aged 1 to 6 years. Also includes children attending the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme. The current opening hours are from 08:00 to 18:00 each day Monday to Friday.

The service is located on the ground floor of a converted, detached, two storey house located in a residential estate in Silversprings, Cork.

The service consists of two playrooms, a Wobbler/Toddler room and a Pre-school room. There is an entrance hall, combined office and staff room, a storeroom that stores cots and individual sleeping floor mats when not in use.

There is one designated adult toilet, two children's toilets, one nappy changing facility and a sluice room. The service has a secure, partially covered outdoor play area located beside the premises.

Staffing

There were four adults attached to the service. All four staff work directly with the children, including the registered provider, deputy person in charge and early years educators.

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/ 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.

Additional Information

A referral was made to the Better Start Quality Development Service with the permission of the registered provider.

A referral was made to the Environmental Health Officer (EHO) following the inspection.

Acknowledgments

The inspectors wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, deputy 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-

(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 had a designated person in charge and deputy person in charge on the premises on the day of inspection.
- (c) There was a clearly identified management structure in the service. This included person in charge, deputy persons in charge and early years educators.
- (2) There were four staff that worked in the service; since the previous inspection on 29 April 2025, one new staff member joined the service. This staff file was open to inspection.
- (a) Of the two references required, two validated references were available from past employers.
- (b) Additional references from other sources were not required.
- (c) A Garda vetting disclosure had been obtained for the staff member. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
- (d) Police vetting was not deemed to be required for the staff member working in the service.

(3) The registered provider had ensured all checks were conducted prior to the start date of the new staff member working directly with the children.

Non-Compliance Information

(1)
(b) On review of the staff time in, time out record of the previous four weeks and in discussion with the registered provider, it was noted that a person in charge or deputy person in charge was not present at all times when the service was in operation.

This issue was also identified on previous inspections on 29 April 2025, 23 May 2024, 19 April 2022 and the 02 December 2021.

(4) The registered provider had not provided the inspectors with a copy of the qualification for the new staff member. The inspectors were unable to determine if the staff member held at least a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 on the National Framework of Qualifications or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(1) (b) The registered provider updated the staff rota to include person in charge and deputy person in charge in the service. Staff are aware of their roles and who is in charge on any given day. Staff sign-in records will document this going forward.

(4) The registered provider submitted the qualification of the new staff member. This is stored in the onsite filing cabinet in the service.

Supporting documentation submitted

(1) (b) A service notice of person in charge and deputy person charge on staff sign ins was submitted to the Early Years Inspectorate.

(4) Photographic evidence of the qualification as submitted to the Early Years Inspectorate.

Summary Comment

All correspondence was examined. The non-compliances under Regulation 9 (1)(b), (4) have been rectified, and the requirement has been met.

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 there were an adequate number of adults available to the children.

Non-Compliance Information

(2) The adult child ratio was not adhered to during staff breaks each day within the service. A review of the roster from the previous four weeks indicated that this occurred regularly. To accommodate breaks from 12:30 to 1:40 the staff ratios were as follows:

- In the Wobbler/Toddler room there was one adult present with seven children aged between 1 to 2 years. The adult child ratios for children aged 1 to 2 years is one to five. One adult present does not meet the regulatory requirement.
- In the Preschool room there was one adult present with two children aged between 2 to 3 years and eight children aged between 3 to 4 years. The adult child ratios for children aged 2 to 3 years is one to six and the adult child ratio for children aged 3-4 years is one to eight. One adult present does not meet the regulatory requirement.

This posed a potential health and safety risk to the children. This was found as a non-compliance on the previous inspections dated the 23 May 2024 and the 29 April 2025 and the corrective and preventative actions submitted by the registered provider did not prevent a recurrence.

(8) The registered provider did not ensure that there were two adults present within the service during the hours of operation. This was confirmed through discussion with the registered provider and staff. This posed a potential safety risk to the children.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(2) The registered provider has since employed a new staff member to the service. This allows for staff ratios to be maintained.

(8) A new staff member commenced in the service and two adults are present at all times during the hours of operation.

Supporting documentation submitted

(2) Photographic evidence of the staff rota was submitted to the Early Years Inspectorate.

(8) Photographic evidence of the staff rota was submitted to the Early Years Inspectorate.

Summary Comment

All correspondence was examined. The non-compliances under Regulation 11 (2)&(8) has been rectified, and the requirement has been met.

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) A record in writing was available on the premises for all children registered with the service. Of these enrolment records, a sample of 11 children's registration forms were inspected. All 11 records included the information from (a) to (i).

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) The attendance of each child on a daily basis for the previous four weeks was recorded, which included the arrival and departure time.
- (k) Details of any accident or injury forms were available to the inspectors. All required information was completed and stored on the premises.

Non-Compliance Information

- (1)
- (i) A weekly staff sign in and sign out record was maintained in the service. The weekly staff sign in and sign out record indicated the names of two of the four staff and their lunch time break cover. However, the details were deemed insufficient due to the following;
- The record did not indicate the adult: child ratio daily in each room of the service.
 - Two adults working in the service were not recorded on the roster or for lunch time break cover.

These issues were identified as non-compliant on the last inspection dated the 29 April 2025 and 23 May 2024 following which the registered provider gave assurances in the registration compliance meeting (RCM) and corrective and preventative response (CAPA) that all would be addressed.

(j) On review of the administration of medication forms in the service, there was one record available for review since the 28 of November 2024 which was not fully completed. A record of consent by parents to administer medication and details of the staff who witnessed the medication being administered was not completed. This posed a risk that parents were not aware that medication was being administered and that incorrect medication may be administered if not witnessed by another staff member.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(i) The registered provider has completed a staff rota to include details of staff ratio and two staff members on the premises at all times. This will be monitored going forward.

(j) The registered provider reviewed the administration of medication procedure with staff and made staff aware that two staff members must be present when administering medication and all information must be documented on the administration form.

Supporting documentation submitted

(i) Photographic evidence of the staff rota was received by the Early Years Inspectorate.

(j) The registered provider's statement was accepted by the Early Years Inspectorate.

Summary Comment

All correspondence was examined. The non-compliances under Regulation 16 (1)(i)&(j) have been rectified, and the requirement has been met.

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) On the day of inspection, the following information was obtained through:

- Direct observation and discussion with staff

- Examination of relevant documentation.

Basic needs:

- Children had access to their individual water bottles throughout the day of inspection.
- Snacks and meals were provided by parents/guardians in the service. Hot meals were reheated by staff on site. Mealtimes were observed to take place in a relaxed environment, staff supported children with opening of their snacks and assisting children with eating their dinners.
- Children's toileting needs were supported throughout the day. Children were reminded of toileting and nappy changing was completed frequently and as needed.
- Staff spoke at the children's level, in a soft tone. Staff were in tune with the children's emotions, comforting children when they were upset.
- Children were able to move freely in the large classroom availing of a wide choice of individual and group activities. Toys observed included magnets, farm animals, artwork and toy cars.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 21 – Equipment and materials

A registered provider shall ensure that there is adequate and suitable furniture, play and work equipment and materials available on the premises of the pre-school service.

Compliance Information

The service ensured there was adequate equipment available for the number of children attending the service. The service had additional toys and materials on the premises. It was observed on day of inspection that the service provided a number of sensory activities including water play and bubbles.

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 external doors were appropriately secured to prevent the entry of an unauthorised person into the service or unsupervised exit of a child.

- The outdoor area was secured with a locked wooden gate and walls.
- Visibility strips were observed on low laying windows.
- Emergency exit doors were clear from obstruction.

Infection control:

- Windows were opened for natural air ventilation.
- Staff were observed cleaning tables between activities and prior to mealtimes.
- Regular handwashing was observed after outdoor play, before snack time and after nappy changing.
- Cots were fitted with waterproof mattresses and placed 50cm apart.

Safe sleep:

- Children had assigned cots in the Wobbler/Toddler room. There was a total of 4 cots for children under 24 months and 4 floor mats available for children over 24 months.
- Stackable beds were used to accommodate sleep in the Toddler room and junior preschool room. Each child had their own sheets.

Fire safety:

- Fire exits were clear of any obstruction and were clearly identified in the room.
- Fire equipment was available in the event they were required.

Non-Compliance Information

General safety:

1. It was observed in the Wobbler/Toddler room that low laying chairs with straps were used for the children attending the service. Children could move around the room while still being strapped into the chair. This posed a risk of injury to the child while using the chairs.
2. A storage room and office/staff room were accessible to children from the Preschool room. Unsuitable material was present such as spilt paint and other potentially hazardous material. This posed a risk of injury should a child have been unsupervised in these areas.
3. The skirting trim in the Preschool room had become loose. This posed a trip hazard within the room.
4. In the nappy changing area there was a sink not in use being stored on the floor, the size of the room could not accommodate the storage of this item. This posed a trip hazard to children.
5. An unsecured stack of baskets were being stored on a cabinet in the sheltered outdoor area of the service. Children were playing around this cabinet throughout the day. This was a safety risk as the baskets could have toppled over causing an injury to a child.

6. In the uncovered outdoor area there was loose fencing being placed around an area that was suitable to be accessed by children. The fencing could be easily moved and had an exposed nail. This posed a risk of injury to the child.

Infection control:

7. There was no soap available to the children in the toilet area off the Preschool room. It is acknowledged that soap was placed in the area at approximately 12:25. Not having access to soap impeded effective hand washing and posed a risk of infection to the children.

8. The nappy changing bin in the nappy changing area was not working efficiently. The pedal was not working, and staff had to hand touch the bin to place nappies into the bin. This poses a risk cross infection to staff and children.

Safe sleep:

9. While children were sleeping, it was observed that a written record of sleep checks were not completed from 12.40pm when children went to sleep until 1.30pm when a staff member returned from lunch. The service not maintaining a written record of children's sleep checks poses a risk to the safe sleep of children.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General safety:

1. The registered provider removed the straps from the low laying chairs. All new equipment will be reviewed going forward.
2. Renovation work was completed following the inspection and this storage room has been adapted to a toddler changing room. The door handle is out of reach of the children preventing unsupervised access.
3. The skirting boards were repaired by the registered provider. This will be monitored by the service going forward.
4. The sink was removed from the nappy changing room. The registered provider will ensure to store any unsuitable equipment safely out of reach by children.
5. The baskets were removed by the registered provider from the outdoor area. These will be stored safely by the service.
6. The fencing was secured to the wall preventing children gaining access. The registered provider will ensure staff will conduct regular risk assessments and checks of the outdoor area.

Infection control:

7. The registered provider stated that regular checks of the bathrooms will be conducted.

8. A new nappy changing bin was purchased by the registered provider. The staff will complete the bathroom cleaning checklist and ensure all equipment is working.

Safe sleep:

9. The registered provider assured that sleep checks will be conducted at regular intervals by staff. This will be stored in an accessible area by staff.

Supporting documentation submitted

General safety:

1. Photograph evidence was submitted to the Early Years Inspectorate.
2. Photographic evidence was submitted to the Early Years Inspectorate.
3. Photographic evidence was submitted to the Early Years Inspectorate.
4. Photograph evidence was submitted to the Early Years Inspectorate.
5. Photograph evidence was submitted to the Early Years Inspectorate.
6. Photograph evidence was submitted to the Early Years Inspectorate.

Infection control:

7. Photograph evidence was received by the Early Years Inspectorate.
8. Photograph evidence and the registered provider's statement was received by the Early Years Inspectorate.

Safe sleep:

9. The registered provider's statement was accepted by the Early Years Inspectorate.

Summary Comment

All correspondence was examined. The non-compliances under Regulation 23 have been rectified, and the requirement has been met.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

A copy of the insurance certificate for the service was furnished to the inspector. The information provided on the insurance certificate included:

- The contact details for the insurance provider.
- The name and address of the service insured.
- The categories of insurance cover for the service.

The expiry date of the current insurance cover was 27 March 2026.

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.*

Compliance Information

- (a) The building appeared of sound and stable structure. There were no visible defects identified on day of inspection.
- (b) The service was maintained in a safe and secure manner. The entrance door was secured using a buzzer system to gain access. This prevented the entry of an unauthorised person or the exit of a child unsupervised. All visitors had to sign in and sign out of the service.
- (c) The lighting in the service was maintained, the heating was maintained at suitable levels and ventilation was adequate throughout the service.

Non-Compliance Information

- (d)
 1. The fire alarm siren was detached from the wall and was dangling by the wire in the hallway between the Preschool room and the children's toilets. This effectiveness of the siren could have been impeded in the event of an emergency as it was not properly maintained.
 2. There were a number of tiles missing from the walls in the nappy changing room and in the children's toilet area. The surface was rough which meant it may have been difficult to clean effectively and posed a possible risk of infection. This was found as a non-compliance on the previous inspection on the 29 April 2025.
 3. There was an exposed wire hanging from the ceiling in the children's toilet area. This had not been repaired since a light fitting had been moved within the room. This left an unfinished surface area on ceiling. This was found as a non-compliance on the previous inspection on the 29 April 2025.
 4. The soft matting in the outdoor area was coming apart, and this could be a trip hazard of left unmaintained.

(e) The children's toilets had no privacy cubicles fitted around each of the two toilets. This impacted on the privacy and dignity of each child. From discussion with the registered provider there were plans to get the cubicles fitted as soon as possible.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

- (d)
1. The fire alarm was relocated and repaired. It is now working and will be checked regularly by the service.
 2. The registered provider ensured the tiles were replaced and cleaned. The registered provider stated that the tiles will be replaced if they are not suitable going forward.
 3. The light fittings were replaced in the sanitary facilities following renovations.
 4. The outdoor soft matting will continue to be monitored, and renovations will be scheduled to address this.

(e) As part of the renovations in the service, privacy cubicles were fitted in the children's sanitary facility. These will be regularly assessed by staff.

Supporting documentation submitted

- (d)
1. Photographic evidence was submitted to the Early Years Inspectorate.
 2. Photographic evidence was submitted to the Early Years Inspectorate.
 3. Photographic evidence was submitted to the Early Years Inspectorate.
 4. The registered provider's statement was accepted by the Early Years Inspectorate.

(e) Photographic evidence was submitted to the Early Years Inspectorate.

Summary Comment

All correspondence was examined. The non-compliances under Regulation 29 (d)&(e) have been rectified, and the requirement has been met. This will be reviewed at the next inspection.