

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CC154			
Name of Service:	First Steps Creche			
Address of Service:	4 Marrick, Halycon Drive, Silversprings, Cork,			
Eircode:	T23 RY89			
Name of Registered Provider:	Rosaleen Cotter			
Service type:	Full Day,			
Date of Inspection:	10/11/2023			
No of pre-school children:	AM	19	PM	19
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate Administration Building St Mary's Health Campus Gurrabraher Cork T23X440			
Inspection undertaken by:	Ms. M. O'Reilly			
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).

Conditions if applicable

N/A

Description of service

First Steps Creche is a registered early years service in operation since 2002. This service provides education and care to children aged from 1 to 6 years offering full day care type service only. This includes the children attending the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme. The current opening hours are from 8am to 6pm each day Monday to Friday.

The service is located on the ground floor of a converted, detached, two storey dwelling house located in a residential estate in a suburban area of Silversprings, Cork. There are three care rooms Wobbler Room, Toddler Room and Pre-school Room. The service has a secure, spacious, partially covered outdoor play area located to the side of the premise.

Staffing

There were seven adults present on the inspector's arrival to the service on day of inspection. The five staff that work directly with the children includes the person in charge. The remaining two adults were the registered provider who was present until 11:45 am and was office based during her visit. The registered provider is not serviced based. The seventh adult was a third level student on her first day of her work placement. The staff working directly with the children all hold a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education.

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

This inspection was triggered by information received by the National Early Years Feedback and Concerns Department.

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.

Part II - Registration and Register

Regulation 8 - Notification of change in circumstances

(1) A registered provider of a pre-school service other than a temporary pre-school service shall, subject to paragraph (3), notify the Agency in writing of any proposed change in the details in relation to the pre-school service contained in the register pursuant to section 58C (2) of the Act or Regulation 7(2) at least 60 days before it is proposed that the change would take effect.

Compliance Information

The service was operating within the service current registration status. On inspection, it was found that:

- the children in attendance were aged between 1 and 6 years.
- the named person in charge was present in the service at time of inspection.
- the hours of operation were between 8am and 6pm

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.*

(7) A registered provider shall ensure that all employees, unpaid workers and contractors are appropriately supervised and provided with appropriate information, and where necessary training, including in relation to the following:

- (a) the policies, procedures and statements of the service specified in Schedule 5;
- (b) Part VIIA (inserted by section 92 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013 (No. 40 of 2013)) of the Act, and
- (c) these Regulations.

Compliance Information

(1)

(a) There was a named designated person in charge and a named person to deputise as required.

(b) The registered provider, person in charge and the deputy were present when the inspector arrived on the premises on the day of the inspection. The person in charge and the deputy remained for the duration of the inspection. The registered provider left the premise at 11:45 am.

(2)

The Inspector concentrated on vetting the two new adults to the service since the last inspection. The inspection dated the 11th May 2023, the vetting of the remaining adults in the service were completed. The two new adults were: a staff member that works in the afternoon in the service and the second adult was the third level student on work placement. Both adults were present on day of inspection

(a) There was one reference with a corresponding written validation on file from a past employer in respect of the two adults.

(b) There were three references with the required written validation on file from a source other than a previous employer.

(c) A Garda vetting record was received for each of the two adults.

(d) A police vetting record was available for the adult that had worked outside the jurisdiction for a period of longer than six consecutive months.

(4)

The staff member that worked directly with the children held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education. A letter of qualification recognition obtained from the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) was available on file in respect of the staff member. The student on work placement is currently studying to obtain a childcare qualification.

(7)(a) There was evidence to suggest that staff had received appropriate information and training on the services policies and procedures. There was a written record where staff had signed their name after reading each of the services policies and procedures. The person in charge stated that during the summer months the staff were allowed to complete some of the online training while at work. The person in charge stated that one new staff member has commenced in the service since she started her role as the person in charge in March 2023. She took responsibility for the induction of this new staff member.

An example of some of the online training included.

- Children First (Introduction)
- Children First (mandated person)
- Health and Safety included chemical safety, introduction to ergonomic assessment, slips, trips and falls
- Manual Handling

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 10 - Policies, procedures etc. of pre-school service

A registered provider of a pre-school service shall ensure that the written policies, procedures and statements specified in Schedule 5 are in place for the service.

Compliance Information

The following policies were assessed by the inspector. It was found that each of the policies met the requirements:

- Service's behaviour management policy.
- Service's inclusion policy.
- Service's settling-in policy.
- Service's sleep policy.
- Service's complaints policy

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) The registered provider and the person in charge ensured that there were an adequate number of adults working directly with the children at all times. An adequate number of adults were observed to be available for the direct care of the children present on day of inspection.

(2) On the day of the inspection: the following adult child ratios were observed.

Wobbler Room

On day of inspection there were 5 children in attendance in the morning and in the afternoon. The 5 children were aged between 1 and 2 years with two adults in attendance until 11am. During the children's lunch time, sleep time, nappy changing times and staff break time. The adult had the assistance of another adult in the service when required.

Toddler Room

On day of inspection there were 6 children in attendance in the morning and in the afternoon. The six children were aged between 2 and 3 years with one adult in attendance. The student was gaining work experience in this room on day of inspection.

Preschool Room

There were 8 children in attendance in the morning and in the afternoon. All the children were aged between 3 and 6 years with 1 adult in attendance in the morning and in the afternoon. The adult had the assistance of another staff member when required.

An adult commenced at 1:30pm to relieve staff for their lunch time breaks and assist the staff in all the rooms when required.

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:

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

Compliance Information

The person in charge stated that all accidents and incidents that occur while children are in attendance in the service are recorded in the services accident and incident book. The parents and guardians are informed of the incident when it occurs, and the accident/incident form is completed. The parent/guardian sign the accident and incident record on pick up of child and a duplicate copy of the accident report is given to the parent/guardian as per the accident and incident policy. It was noted that all accident and incident reports reviewed at time of inspection had all the required information documented and were signed by the staff member that witnessed the incident and the parent/guardian.

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

(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.

(3) A registered provider shall ensure that no practices that are disrespectful, degrading, exploitive, intimidating, emotionally or physically harmful or neglectful are carried out in respect of a pre-school child whilst attending the service.

Compliance Information

BASIC NEEDS:

- On the day of inspection, a calm, relaxed, unhurried environment was provided for the children. It was observed that the adults spoke kindly and offered encouragement and assisted each child as required.
- It was observed that children were provided with appropriate cutlery and crockery at snack and mealtimes. The mid-morning snack provided by the service consisted of slices of apple with water to drink. The children were served adequate portions of breaded chicken goujons, mashed potato and beans with water to drink at lunch time. When offered, many of the children availed of second helpings at lunch time. It was observed that staff were readily available to assist the children at snack and meal time.
- Children's toileting and hygiene needs were promptly and sensitively attended to. Independent use of the toilet was encouraged. The staff members were observed to supervise and assist where required each of the children when hand washing and hand drying. The children were supported and encouraged prior to eating, post toileting and after outdoor play.
- An adult was noted at all times in the Wobbler Room that was converted into a sleep room after lunch. The adult stayed with the children as they settled down to sleep.

SUPPORTING RELATIONSHIPS AROUND CHILDREN:

- Children's behaviour was managed in a competent and positive way and the adults were observed to support the children and handle any minor behavioural issues promptly. The adults supported children to be sociable and respectful towards each other and spoke and listened to them in a calm and sensitive manner.
- The children from the wobbler room moved to the toddler rooms at lunch time. The staff were observed speaking with the children during snack and mealtimes. The staff were using it as an opportunity to enhance social interaction with the children which promoted a relaxed atmosphere.
- Staff helped children to recognise and understand sharing and working together as a group as seen on day of inspection when children were involved in various activities. The children were observed waiting their turn, sharing the experience during a group game outdoors of "Hide and seek".

- The staff communicated with parents at drop off and collection times. Parents had the opportunity to text or phone at any time while their child was attending the service. Information shared with parents included written observations on each child's wellbeing and development and emerging interests. A record of activities of daily living, such as food intake, sleep, nappy changes and outdoor play are given to each parent/guardian at pick up time.
- In the Wobbler room, adults interacted with the children at their level as they explored their environment, acknowledging their interest in various materials and communicating in a patient, encouraging manner.
- It was observed that upset children and children who were in the process of settling in at the service, were comforted and reassured, as needed.
- Child led play was supported by staff in the Toddler and Preschool rooms and it was observed during the course of the inspection that the children in all three rooms spent time playing outdoors.

PHYSICAL AND MATERIAL ENVIRONMENT

- There was a secured outdoor play area positioned beside the facility. The ground surface of the outdoor play area was covered in an all-weather surface. The outdoor play area was partially covered, and the covered /sheltered area is like an outdoor playroom. It is located beside the preschool room, and it was observed throughout the inspection that the double glass sliding door was open allowing the children the choice in the preschool room to play indoors or outdoors. In the covered area the children were provided with chairs and tables and a shelving unit where blocks and fine motor play equipment was stored. There was also a sand unit, easel, slides kitchen unit, dolls and prams. The part of the outdoor play area not covered, the children had a choice of activities such as a selection of push and ride on toys and a large timber climbing frame with two slides. The older children were observed engaged in free play and physical play in this area.

(3) During the inspection it was noted that the early year's children were under the direct supervision of the staff at all times. The children were always visible to the key worker when playing indoors and outdoors. All staff practises and procedures observed on day of inspection were respectful towards each of the early years children in their care.

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

- It was observed that there were a variety of age-appropriate play equipment and materials available to the children in each of the three playrooms and in the outdoor play area. The play equipment was stored at child height so children could pick and choose what play equipment they wanted to play with, encouraging child directed play.

Non-Compliance Information

- There was an insufficient number of suitable age-appropriate support chairs for children aged between 1 and 2 years available in the service at mealtimes. It was observed on day of inspection that all the children had their lunch at the same time. It was noted that there were 5 children aged between 1 and 2 years in attendance. There were only 4 age-appropriate suitable chairs available at lunch time for this age group when 5 were required.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

- In the written response the registered provider stated the following:
Additional feeding chairs are now in place for children aged between 1 and 2 years to sit at food breaks and mealtimes in the service.

Supporting documentation submitted

- Photographic evidence of the additional feeding chairs was forwarded to the early years inspector and deemed satisfactory

Summary Comment

- Correspondence forwarded to the Early Years Inspectorate was examined and deemed to meet the requirement of Regulation 21 of the Childcare Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016.

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 entrance door was secured to prevent unauthorised access by a person or the leaving of an unsupervised child.
- The internal doors leading to the playrooms were secured by locks located at adult height that could only be accessed by the staff.
- It was noted in the wobbler and preschool rooms that the fridges, dishwashers and all cupboards at child height were adequately secured with child proof locks.

Safe Sleep:

- When lunch was completed, it was observed that the Wobbler playroom was converted into a sleep room for the children under 2 years that required a sleep while attending the service. Five standard cots with safety mattresses were wheeled out of the storeroom and into the wobbler room. The five children present on day of inspection aged between 1 and 2 years slept in their own designated standard cots in the wobbler playroom. There were an adequate number of standard cots with safety mattresses for children under two that required a sleep with individual accompanying bed linen. There was adequate space provided between the cots.
- The older pre-school child's rest needs were met during a planned sleeping period when stacking beds were set up in one area of the preschool room. There were a sufficient number of stacking beds available with designated suitable bed linen for each child over 2 years who wanted a sleep while attending the service. On the day of the inspection it was observed, there were three children over two years that had a sleep. The other children in attendance in the preschool and toddler rooms were given the choice of playing outdoors or playing tabletop activities in the preschool room. A staff member was observed supervising the three sleeping children and the 5 children playing tabletop activities quietly at the other side of the room. It was observed that none of the remaining children over 2 years appeared tired or wanted to sleep and instead were happy and content to play with their peers indoors and outdoors.

- It was observed that a staff member monitored the sleeping children and maintained a written record of the 10-minute sleep check of all sleeping children. It was noted that an adult was present in the wobbler room at all times monitoring the sleeping children.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-
(e) equipped with adequate and suitable sanitary facilities.

Compliance Information

On day of inspection, there were 10 children that required nappy changing. The ratio is one nappy changing unit and one wash hand basin for every 11 children that require nappy changing. The nappy changing facility available in the service was sufficient for the number of children that required nappy changing on day of inspection.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 30 - Minimum space requirements

(1) Subject to paragraphs (2) to (6), a registered provider shall ensure that adequate clear floor space is available in the premises for the work, play and movement of children attending the pre-school service.

(2) A registered provider of a full day care service or a part-time day care service shall ensure that the minimum amount of clear floor space specified in column (3) of Schedule 7 opposite a particular reference number specified in column (1) of that Schedule in respect of the age range of children specified in column (2) thereof at that reference number is available for each child in that age range attending the service.

Compliance Information

(1) +(2) There was adequate space provided for the number of children in attendance on day of inspection.

The service had a Fit for purpose inspection on the 1st September 2023. The service is now registered to cater for children aged between 1 and 6 years.

Wobbler Room measured 24.7 square meters.

The room can accommodate a maximum of 9 children aged between 1 and 2 years at 2.8 square meters per child.

There were 5 children aged between 1 and 2 years in attendance on day of inspection. Adequate space was provided for the number of children in attendance.

The Toddler Room/multipurpose room measured 14.24 square meters.

The room can accommodate a maximum of 6 children at 2.35 square meters per child at any one time.

There were 6 children aged between 2 and 3 years in attendance on day of inspection. Adequate space was provided for the number of children in attendance.

The Preschool Room can accommodate 14 children attending a sessional service (1:81 square meters per child) or 10 children attending a full day care service (2.3 square meters per child) at any one time. As the service has decided to cater for children attending full day care only. Ten children is the maximum number of children in this room There were 8 children aged between 2 years 10 months and 6 years in attendance in the preschool room on day of inspection. Adequate space was provided for the number of children in attendance.

Part VIII - Notifications and Complaints

Regulation 32 – Complaints

- (1) A registered provider shall ensure that the complaints policy of the service specifies-
- (a) the procedure to be followed by a person for the purposes of making a complaint in relation to the service,
 - (b) the manner in which such a complaint shall be dealt with, and
 - (c) the procedures for keeping a person who makes such a complaint informed of the manner in which it is being dealt with.
- (2) A registered provider shall ensure that-
- (a) a record in writing is kept of a complaint made to the provider in respect of the pre-school service, and
 - (b) the complaint is duly dealt with in accordance with the provider's complaints policy.
- (3) A record in writing referred to in paragraph (2)(a) shall-
- (a) include the nature of the complaint and the manner in which the complaint was dealt with, and
 - (b) be open to inspection on the premises by an authorised person.

Compliance Information

The complaints policy includes.

- (1) (a) The procedure to be followed by a person for the purposes of making a complaint in relation to the service.
- (b) How complaints are dealt with by the service.
- (c) The procedures for ensuring that the person who makes the complaint, is kept informed in relation to the manner in which the complaint is being dealt with.

(2) +(3)

At time of inspection the Inspector requested to see previous complaints that the service had received from parents and staff. The person in charge stated that she was not aware of any complaints received since she commenced in the service as the person in charge from March 2023. The registered provider stated that no complaint had come to her attention from parents/guardians or staff. The registered provider stated she was aware of the steps she had to adhere to on receipt of any complaint.