

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CC385
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Name of Service:	Step by Step Pre-School
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Address of Service:	Parochial House, Rockchapel, Co. Cork
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Eircode:	P51 TY38
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Name of Registered Provider:	Kate Kelly
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Service type:	Part Time, Sessional
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Date(s) of Inspection:	27/11/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	8	PM	5
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Second Floor, Estuary House, Henry Street, Limerick.
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Inspection undertaken by:	F. Collins
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Title:	Early Years Inspector
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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	Not applicable
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Description of service

Step by Step pre-school is located in the old parochial house on the church grounds of the in the village of Rockchapel in North Cork. The service operates as a part-time day care service from 09.00-13.30 daily and facilitates a sessional service between the hours of 09.00 and 12.00 daily, Monday to Friday for 38 weeks of the year.

The service caters for children aged between 2 and 6 years.

The premises is two story with one care room on the ground floor and one on the first floor. Downstairs, there are children's toilets and a kitchenette. Upstairs there is a children's toilet and an adult toilet and space for storage. In this academic year only the downstairs room is being used due to the number of children attending.

The outdoor play facility to the right of the building is secured by fencing, a wall and an access gate. The second space used is a large tarmacadam area to the rear of the church.

There is adequate parking at the side of the church in front of the pre-school which allows for the safe drop off and collection of the children.

Staffing

There were three staff working in the service and on the day of inspection. The registered provider was not onsite on the day of inspection.

The four staff inclusive of the registered provider, working in the service were qualified at level 6 to level 8 on the national qualifications framework and staff had completed the (LINC) Leadership for Inclusion programme to promote inclusion for all children in the service.

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.

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 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,
- (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) There was a named person in charge and a deputy person in charge in the service when the inspector arrived and both staff remained in the service for the duration of the inspection.
- (b) The roster indicated that there was a person in charge on the premises at all times during the operation of the service.
- (c) There was a clear management structure within the service with all staff aware of their roles and responsibilities.
2. There were three staff working in the service and their files along with that of the registered provider were assessed.

Of the four files assessed eight references were required:

- (a) Of the eight references required all eight were available from a past employer.
- (c) Of the four staff files assessed the required Garda Vetting disclosure was available for all four staff. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice 'EYI-RN12.3 Renewal of Garda Vetting' requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
- (d) Not applicable as police vetting was not required for the four adults whose files were assessed.
- (3) All four adults employed in the service had all vetting and requirements of (9) (2) completed prior to commencing in the service.
- (4) The registered provider ensured that all four staff that may work in the service were appropriately qualified at level 5 or above on the National Qualifications Framework.

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 Recruitment policy was reviewed and outlined all of the relevant information required when recruiting staff ensuring they are appropriately vetted and qualified as appropriate.
- The immunisation section of the Infection control policy was reviewed and was in keeping with best practice on how to guide staff when children are/are not immunised and attending the service.

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 ensured that there were adequate staff working in the service at all times.
- (2) The registered provider ensured that the minimum ratio of adults to children was maintained. There were three adults working directly with eight pre-school children.

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

There were eight children in attendance on the day of inspection.

All eight children's files were assessed.

- (1) (a) –(i) The information as set out above was available and recorded in seven of the eight files assessed. The remaining file had (a)-(f) and (i) recorded.

Non-Compliance Information

- (1) The information required in (g) & (h) was not available for one child attending the service. Not having information pertaining to a child may hinder their care in the event that information is required by the staff.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

- (1) The information required above in (g) & (h) for the child whose record was assessed has been obtained by the registered provider. The staff who review all forms completed for children before they start will ensure that all information is available as required.

Supporting documentation submitted

(1) (h) Immunisation records have been received.

Summary Comment

The requirements for this regulation as assessed have been met.

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:

- (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) (j) No medication had been administered in this academic year for the records to be assessed. The staff were aware of the requirements for recording when medication is administered.

(k) There were three accidents/incidents in this academic year, and all three records were assessed. All records were maintained as required and had all of the relevant details and signatures recorded.

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

BASIC NEEDS

- The children on the day of inspection ate together and the food was provided by the parents/guardians. The food was healthy, and each child had access to drinks of water or milk.
- The children were helped if needed with using the toilet. The children were reminded to wash their hands after outdoor play and before snack time.

- The staff ensured that the children wore warm clothing when going outside to play on the wet and cold day to ensure the children's comfort.
- The children could rest when required as there was access to a 'cubby' area which was carpeted and had scatter cushions. The children were observed to use this area. No child indicated the need for sleep during the inspection.
- The children could move about freely and there was no restriction on movement observed.
- A child who was enrolled in the service and needed additional support had an appropriate care plan available to guide the staff on how best to support them in the service.
- The care room temperature was recorded at 20.2°C at 9.40am, this ensured comfort of the children attending to be able to play.

SUPPORTING RELATIONSHIPS AROUND CHILDREN:

- Mealtime was sociable with the staff sitting, eating and conversing with the children creating a sociable environment.
- Staff were observed to kneel down with a child who had gotten upset and comforted the child so that they could return to their play activity.
- The staff caring for the children created a supportive environment. This was observed when children sought support with tabletop activities, playing imaginary games of hairdresser and when playing with moulding clay. When outside the staff helped the children when they were riding on tractors, using scooters and bicycles with stabilisers.
- Communication with parents and guardians was observed at drop off and collection and a notice was on the door into the service indicating how parents/guardians could schedule meetings with the staff if one was required.

PHYSICAL AND MATERIAL ENVIRONMENT:

- On the day of inspections and for the rest of this academic year the downstairs room only is in use. The care room had appropriate height tables and chairs which allowed the children independence with using the table for snack and for tabletop activities.
- The shelving was accessible to the children, allowing them to access their equipment and allow for the children to choose and make decisions on what they played with.

- The outdoor play area was in two separate areas. The enclosed play area was covered in artificial grass, had a tunnel to climb through, digging areas of sand and gravel, a sand tray, a large bus for pretend driving and a climbing frame. This area was used on alternative days and the tarmac area to the rear of the church was used on alternative days. In this space the children had access to ride on toys and could run around, see their daffodils that were planted and be shown the river by the staff who were observed to lift each child individually to see the river moving fast.
- Sensory play was evidenced through the use of moulding clay and arts and crafts materials.

PROGRAMME OF ACTIVITIES:

- The service demonstrated a language rich environment with the group singing songs and doing actions in preparation for the Christmas play, where staff were observed to read books and where conversations were supported at all times. It was observed where a child had English as a second language how the staff supported them in ensuring their voice was heard.

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 fire door was secured by a thumb turn lock. The other door mainly used for the drop off and collection was secured by a key lock with the key accessible to the staff and not accessible to the children. These measures ensured that no unauthorised adult could gain access to the service and no child could leave the service unaccompanied.
- The windows were not accessible to the children due to the height of the windows and there were no blinds on the windows.
- All toys and equipment assessed were free from pinch and crush points.
- The cleaning agents were safely stored in a box on a high shelf.
- There were no kettles in the service, and no hot drinks were observed to be consumed.
- The radiator temperatures were satisfactory with the surface temperatures recorded at 33.2 and 30.5°C respectively at the front and back of the care room.

Infection Control:

- The children were observed to wash their hands after outdoor play, after going to the toilet and before snack time minimising the risk of contamination and cross infection.
- Tables were cleaned before and after snack time to ensure a clean surface from where the children could eat.
- There was hot water in the children's toilets recorded at 40.2°C to support adequate hand washing.
- The snacks and lunches provided to the service by the parents/guardians were refrigerated following arrival and this ensured that the perishable items contained within the food provided were stored suitably to prevent bacterial growth.

Administration of Medication:

- No medication had been administered in the service in this academic year.

Safe Sleep:

- No child slept in the service.

Fire Safety:

- The fire extinguishers were safely tethered to the wall and accessible to the staff.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. The children were observed to play with marbles during tabletop activities. These could be a risk to potential cause of choking when accessible to children aged two years and up.

Fire Safety:

2. The fire exit was partially blocked with a soft tent; the tent would potentially be a trip hazard in the event the service needed to be evacuated in an emergency. The person in charge removed the tent from the area near the door immediately when she was made aware of the issue.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. The marbles have been removed from the play area and will no longer be permitted in the service.

Fire Safety:

2. The soft tent has been moved to another area of the playroom and will not be permitted to be moved to the area beside the fire door by children or staff.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

1. The assurances received from the registered provider are accepted as proof that marbles will not be permitted in the service.

Fire Safety:

2. The assurances received from the registered provider are accepted as proof that the tent will not be placed in the vicinity of the fire door.

Summary Comment

Following the corrective and preventive action submission the requirements for this regulation have been met.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 24 - Checking in and out and record of attendance

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that each pre-school child attending the service is checked in and out of the service by an employee or an unpaid worker.

(3) A registered provider shall ensure that-

(a) no person other than-

(i) pre-school child attending the service,

(ii) a person dropping or collecting such a child,

(iii) an employee, or

(iv) an unpaid worker, can enter the premises without his or her entry being approved by an employee, and

(b) a daily record in writing is kept of the entry on the premises of any such person.

Compliance Information

- (1) The registered provider ensured that all children were accurately signed in and out of the service daily. the children were signed into/ out of the service daily by a staff member.
- (3) (b) The registered provider ensured that all visitors to the service excluding those outlined in (a) above signed in and out of the service and that the visit was agreed by a staff member.

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) The fire drills that took place in the service were all recorded, and the last fire drill took place on the 06.11.2025 with evidence that drills take place monthly during the academic year observed.
- (b) The firefighting equipment (Fire extinguishers) were last serviced in June 2025. The fire alarm certificate indicated the fire alarm was last serviced on 10.06.2025.
- (4) The procedure to be followed in the event of a fire was displayed near the exit door