

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

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| <b>TUSLA Identifier:</b>   | TU2015CC390  |    |        |
| <b>Name of Service:</b>  | Stepping Stones Pre-School   |    |        |
| <b>Address of Service:</b>   | Elderwood, Boreenmanna Road, Cork, Co. Cork                                    |    |        |
| <b>Eircode:</b>  | T12 XH67   |    |        |
| <b>Name of Registered Provider:</b>  | Sara Hawthorne   |    |        |
| <b>Service type:</b>   | Sessional  |    |        |
| <b>Date of Inspection:</b>   | 16/01/2025   |    |        |
| <b>No of pre-school children:</b>  | AM   | 19 | PM N/A |
| <b>Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:</b>  | Early Years Inspectorate<br>13 Market Square,<br>Mallow,<br>Co Cork<br>P51DD5Y |    |        |
| <b>Inspection undertaken by:</b>   | B Fraher   |    |        |
| <b>Title:</b>  | Early Years Inspector  |    |        |
| <b>Authority to Inspect</b>  |  |    |        |
| 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). |  |    |        |
| <b>Conditions if applicable</b>  | N/A  |    |        |

### Description of service

Stepping Stones Pre-school is a privately operated service that caters for children aged between two and six years old. It provides sessional care for Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme. Daily opening hours are from 9:00 to 12:00. Stepping Stones Pre-School is situated on the ground floor of a building complex located in a residential area on the suburbs of Cork city. There is one large playroom provided that has been purposely built as a childcare service. There is an enclosed outdoor play area available to the rear of the premises.

### Staffing

There are 3 staff attached to the service including the registered provider. On the day of the inspection all three staff were on site working with the children.

### Methodology

### Additional Information

An immediate action notice was issued to the registered provider by email on the day of inspection as no staff member had up to date first aid responder training (FAR). A staff member was enrolled in FAR training and commenced this on the 16<sup>th</sup> of January 2025. This was adequate to mitigate the risk.

### 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*

*(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.*

*(4) A registered provider shall ensure that, without prejudice to the generality of paragraph (2) and subject to paragraphs (5) and (6), each employee working directly with children attending the service holds at least a major award in Early childhood Care and Education at Level 5 on the National Qualifications Framework or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.*

## Compliance Information

- (1)
- (a) The registered provider was the person in charge and had ensured a designated deputy in charge was assigned to the service.
  - (b) The deputy in charge was on duty at the service when the inspector arrived, and the registered provider arrived soon after.
- (2) The recruitment records of all 3 staff working in the service were assessed for compliance. The following information was noted:
- (a) (b) Of the 6 required references, five were from previous employers and one was from a source other than a previous employer. All reference validations that were required were completed.
  - (c) Garda Vetting disclosures had been obtained for all 3 staff. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda Vetting every three years.
  - (d) Documented evidence indicated that no staff member lived outside of the jurisdiction for longer than six consecutive months. Police vetting was not required.
- (4) All 3 staff members had achieved major awards in Early Childhood Care and Education, as listed on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ), with copies of the relevant qualifications on file.

### 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 reviewed and were found to meet the necessary requirements:

- Policy on Healthy Eating
- Policy on Accidents and Incidents
- Policy on Infection Control

### 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.*

*(3) Subject to paragraph (5), a registered provider of a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that at all times the minimum ratio of adults to children specified in column (3) of Part 2 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) therefore at that reference number is satisfied..*

#### Compliance Information

(1) At the time of inspection, there was an adequate number of adults responsible for the direct care and supervision of the children in attendance at all times.

(3) The adult child ratio was observed to be as follows:

There were three adults directly caring for 10 children in attendance.

### 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 sample of 10 records of early years children attending the service were reviewed. These were found to contain all particulars inclusive of (a) to (i) referred to in paragraph 1.

### 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 services current accident and incident record book commenced in January 2024. This was inspected and was found to contain all the relevant information.

### 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

On the day of inspection, the following information was obtained through direct observation and discussion with the staff:

#### Basic Needs:

- Snacks which were provided by parents/ guardians were observed to be healthy and nutritious. Examples included bread rolls, fruit, crackers and yogurt.
- Staff sat beside the children at mealtime and assisted the children as needed.
- Water was readily available to the children throughout the day.
- The children were observed accessing the toilet area as required and assistance was given by staff if needed.
- Children who wished to rest while attending the service could avail of a soft cushion area.
- The layout of the room supported the children to move freely within their environment and to actively engage in their chosen tasks.

### Supporting relationships:

- Staff were observed engaging positively with children throughout the morning. During tabletop activities staff were heard praising children's efforts and giving encouragement in relation to each child's chosen activity.
- Staff encouraged communication and language development with the children. Staff were observed asking a child to expand on topics that interests them.
- Various methods of communication were stated as being used to exchange information with the parents/guardians. Staff stated in conversation that they speak to the parents at drop off and collection. Staff also use a text message and email system to relay information to the parents.
- The adults working with the children were seen to be sensitive and responsive in promoting positive behaviour. This was seen when two children disagreed over a toy and the staff members assisted the children to come to a solution.
- The atmosphere in the care room throughout the inspection was observed to be relaxed and pleasant.

### 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:

- When the inspector arrived at the service, the entrance door was secured. This restricted unauthorised access to the building and helped to prevent the risk of children exiting.
- The toys and play equipment assessed were in good condition.
- Cleaning agents were adequately stored out of reach of the children.
- The temperature of the warm water in the care room and the sanitary accommodations were recorded at between 32.3°C and 33.4°C.

#### Infection Control:

- Handwashing facilities were accessible to the children, with warm running water, liquid soap and paper towel.
- Children were observed to wash their hands before food and after using the toilet.
- Children's coats were stored off the ground.
- A lidded pedal bin was in use for the storage of waste.

- A refrigerator was available for the storage of perishable foods and the children's perishable items were stored in this until snack time.

**Administration of Medication:**

- The registered provider informed me that there were no children currently on medication.

**Fire Safety:**

- Fire exits were noted to be free from obstruction.

**Outing:**

- The registered provider informed me that they did not go on outings from the service.

**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**

(2)  
(a) There was a sufficiently stocked first aid box available in the service which was safely stored out of reach of the children.  
(b) At all times during the inspection, first aid supplies were accessible to the adults if a child may require treatment.

**Non-Compliance Information**

An immediate action notice was issued to the registered provider as no staff member had up to date first aid responder (FAR). It is acknowledged by the inspector that a staff member enrolled on the course that day. This response was adequate to mitigate the risk.

### Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The following statement was received from the registered provider:

#### **Corrective and Preventive Action**

A staff member's name had been placed on a waiting list for training prior to the inspection and evidence of this was shown to the inspector. The registered provider booked FAR training the day of the inspection and the staff member received a certificate of completion on the 5 February 2025. The registered provider plans to complete first aid training.

#### **Supporting documentation submitted**

Photographic evidence of certification was received.

### Summary Comment

The registered provider demonstrated that the non-compliance identified under Regulation 25 has been addressed.

## Part VI - Safety

### Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

#### **Compliance Information**

The insurance certificate indicated that sufficient cover was in place for the provision of a sessional service and the policy was valid until 27 March 2025.