

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CN054				
Name of Service:	Small Steps Childcare				
Address of Service:	Unit 4, 5 and 6 Aeta Place, Gortnaskesh, Cavan				
Eircode:	H12 TX63				
Name of Registered Provider:	Anne Reilly				
Service type:	Full Day				
Date(s) of Inspection:	22/05/2023				
No of pre-school children:	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>AM</td> <td>34</td> <td>PM</td> <td>19</td> </tr> </table>	AM	34	PM	19
AM	34	PM	19		
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Family Resource Centre, Commons Road, Navan, Co. Meath				
Inspection undertaken by:	C Tunney				

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

Small Steps Childcare is a privately operated Early Years' Service located in Cavan town, in operation since 2013. The childcare service provides full day care, part time and a sessional service to children aged from 1 year to 6 years. The service operates from 8am-6pm Monday to Friday and participates in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme. The pre-school comprises of three pre-school rooms which were in operation on the day of inspection. An outdoor play area was located to the rear of the pre-school.

Staffing

Eight staff members are employed in the service including the manager. The manager is the designated person in charge. The registered provider is not service based.

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 announced and focused on the area of governance/ health, welfare and development of child/ safety/ premises and facilities. The inspections may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under Regulation 9 Management & Recruitment, Regulation 11 Staffing Levels, Regulation 19 Health, Welfare & Development of Child, Regulation 21 Equipment and Materials, Regulation 23 Safeguarding Health, Safety and Welfare of Child, Regulation 24 Checking In and Out and Record of Attendance, Regulation 25 First Aid, Regulation 26 Fire Safety Measures and Regulation 29 Premises. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report. The three pre-school rooms in operation on the day of inspection were inspected.

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 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.

(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) The registered provider had identified a manager and a named person to deputise as required.

(b) The deputy was present on arrival of the inspector.

(2) The deputy confirmed there were two new staff employed since the last inspection in 2021. The files of the two new staff were reviewed at this inspection.

(a) Three written past employer reference were available and validated.

(b) In the absence of past employer references a reference from a source other than an employer was available.

(c) Garda Vetting was available in respect of the two adults.

(d) Not applicable as the adults had not lived outside the state for a period of more than 6 consecutive months.

(4) The two staff members held a major award in Early childhood Care and Education at Level 5 on the National Qualification Framework.

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) There was an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the service.

(2) The adult to child ratios were correct in the service when the inspectors arrived.

The following adult to child ratios were observed as follows:

- **Toddler Room:** Two adult's cared for 7 pre-school children, (aged between 2 years 2 months to 3 years 1 month) of which 5 children were attending for part time/ full day care.
- **Pre-School Room 1:** Two staff members cared for 13 pre-school children (aged between 3-6 years), of which 7 children were attending for full day care.
- **Pre-School Room 2:** Two staff members cared for 14 pre-school children (aged between 3-6 years), of which 7 children were attending for full day care.

(8) Two staff members are present, at all times in the service as required by Regulation 11 (8) as evidenced from examination of the staff roster and staff sign in.

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.

Compliance Information

Basic Needs:

- Children's lunches were observed to be nutritious and healthy. Children attending for full day care were provided a snack by the service of fruit, yogurt and bread sticks. Dinner was provided by an outside catering company and consisted of sausages, pasta and vegetable served in an age-appropriate consistency. The staff members sat with the children during snack time / dinner and was attentive to their needs; conversations and interactions between the children and the adults were observed to be informative and playful. Drinks were stored at a low level, the children could access their drinks as they wished.
- The children's personal care was attended to. Hand hygiene was carried out at recommended times, prior to mealtimes and following personal care and outdoor play. The children were supported to be self-caring, suitable to the age and stage of development, including hand washing, toileting and caring for their belongings.
- Nappy changing was carried out at a timely manner.
- Rest areas were available for the children to avail of quiet time.

Supporting Relationships:

- Positive engagement between the staff members and children were noted. The staff members used age-appropriate soft tones, used the child's individual name and engaged respectfully with the children.
- The staff members were attentive to the children especially to the children who required additional support. Transitions are clearly announced and signalled by staff.
- An adult chair facilitated staff to provide nurturing care during bottle feeding or assist a child if unsettled.

Planning and Assessment.

- The children had opportunities to enjoy free time and group time. There was evidence staff members plan themes for discussion in advance and progress assessments are carried out. In group time the children enjoyed familiar songs and spoke about the weather and activity topics. The staff members appeared familiar with the children's interests and choices; they promoted the children's independence while offering adequate support as required.

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 play materials and furniture in the Toddler Room included a sand tray, construction toys such as trucks and large blocks, a small slide, a play kitchen with support material and arts n crafts. Evidence of the children's artwork was displayed. Our family Tree and pictures of the children added a pleasant ambiance for the young children attending. There was a soft seating area and an adult armchair to support the young children.
- The two Pre-school Rooms contained play materials including dress up clothes, arts n crafts, construction toy area, kitchen with support material, playhouse, included soft toys, small animals, beauty sets and dolls and prams to support imaginative play. There was a nature table with twigs, rocks, and shells which brought the natural environment into the pre-school room.

Non-Compliance Information

The play material in the outdoor area was inadequate. The focus of the play area was messy play and wooden/plastic kitchen areas, however there was no support material available in these designated areas when the children were outside playing to engage the children with this equipment.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The garden play materials for mud kitchen have been updated (photo evidence attached).

Going forward the materials in the garden will be checked daily to ensure adequate materials are available.

Summary Comment

The response from the registered provider has been accepted. Photographic evidence demonstrated that appropriate play materials are now available to support the children play time in the outdoor environment. Regulation 21 has been adequately addressed.

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 premises were appropriately secured to prevent pre-school children from exiting unsupervised and restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the pre-school.
- Cleaning agents were stored out of reach of children.
- Children's attendance was recorded daily, staff members also recorded their attendance.
- The outdoor area was adequately secured.

Infection Control:

- Hand washing was carried out as recommended, children were encouraged to be independent, and assistance was given as required.
- Prior to the children's meals, tables were cleaned.
- Warm running water was available in the children's sanitary area, along with a supply of liquid soap, and foot operated bins.

Administration of Medication:

- Medication was not observed been administered on the day of inspection.

Safe Sleep:

- The sleep room contained four cots which were maintained in a proper state of repair except as outlined below. Children did not avail of sleep time on the day of inspection.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. The blue slide in the outdoor area was broken and presented as a pinch hazard.
2. In Pe-school Room 2, a trailing flex from a music stereo was noted which presented as a safety hazard.

Infection Control:

3. The foot pedal bin in Pre-school Room 2 was broken, staff had to raise the lid to dispose of waste which presented as an infection control risk.
4. There were no paper hand towels available in the children's toilets, children were observed drying their hands with strips of toilet roll which presented as an infection control risk.
5. The standard of cleaning in the pre-school was inadequate such as the soft rug in the Toddler Room where the young children sit down was heavily stained, the covering of the adult chair was not clean the rooms required a deep clean, soft toys were not clean, dust was noted on vents in the nappy changing area, and doors and skirting boards required cleaning.

Safe Sleep

6. One of the mattresses was soft and not firm in variance to safe sleep guidance.

Administration of medication:

7. Administration of medication records viewed did not contain a witness signature to ensure medication administration procedures are carried out in a safe way in the pre-school service.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective Action

1. The slide has been removed and a new slide is in place. Another larger slide has been ordered.
2. The music stereo has been placed out of reach of children.
3. Peddle bin has been replace with a new one.
4. Service was waiting on a delivery of hand towels the day of inspection, which arrived the day after inspection. All toilets are stocked with hand towels.
5. Service is in the process of recruiting a cleaner for deep cleaning. In the meantime, daily cleaning of the service is carried out.
6. Mattress has been replaced with a new one.
7. Administration of medicine is always witnessed by another staff member. Staff have been made aware of the importance of signing this.

Prevention Action

1. Ensure any materials that are damaged to be removed and replaced.
2. Ensure no leads are at children's level.
3. Ensure orders for handtowels etc are placed will in advance of running out and daily cleaning of the service is carried out.
4. Check mattress regularly to ensure firm.
5. Staff have been made aware of importance of witness signing medication book.

Summary Comment

The response from the registered provider has been accepted. Appropriate corrective and preventative actions have been carried out as outlined by the registered provider above to prevent a re occurrence. Regulation 23 has been addressed.

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) A record was kept of each child's time of arrival and departure on a daily basis by the staff members.

(3)(a) and (b) A system was in place to ensure that no person other than the children's parents / guardians, employees or authorised visitors can enter the pre-school. A visitor's book was maintained, there was evidence that visitors were requested to record their attendance, the inspector was requested to record her arrival and departure times.

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) and (b)

- The first aid box was suitably equipped and safely stored in readily accessible positions in the care rooms out of the reach of children.

Non-Compliance Information

The registered provider did not ensure that a person trained in First Aid Response (FAR) was at all times immediately available to the children attending the pre-school service. A staff member with an up-to-date certificate in FAR training was not available (the Manager confirmed all staff have general first aid training).

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective Action

All Staff have received FAR training. Certifications attached.

Prevention Action

Ensure FAR training is up to date.

Summary Comment

The response from the registered provider has been accepted. Documentation submitted demonstrated that eight staff members hold valid FAR certificates. Regulation 25 has been addressed.

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.
- (2) The record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection by-
- (c) an authorised person.
- (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) A record was maintained of fire drills which had been completed in the service. Fire drills were carried out monthly. The last recorded fire drill took place on 27/4/ 2023.
- (b) A record was kept of the number, type and maintenance of the fire extinguishers and smoke alarms in the premises, which were last serviced 10/1/23 and 7/12/22 respectively.
- (2) (c) The record referred to above was available and open for inspection.
- (4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire was conspicuously displayed in the premises.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

- A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-
- (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

- (b) The premises was safe and secure at the time of inspection.
- (c) The service was adequately lit, heated, and ventilated.
- (e) There was adequate sanitary facilities for the number of children attending.

Non-Compliance Information

(d) There was evidence that the service was not adequately maintained such as:

- (1) The flooring in the hallway had lifted, and taped however there were gaps and holes noted which was not satisfactory and posed a trip hazard. There was also a gap in the floor in the Pre-school Room and the lino had also lifted around the entrance to the Sleep Room and Pre-school Rooms.
- (2) The fencing in the outdoor area was in poor condition and required maintenance.
- (3) A leak was noted in the water cistern in one of the children's toilets, an orange bowl was used to collect excess water.

A non-compliance in relation to the flooring was noted on the last inspection in November 2021 and in August 2022. The registered provider stated in the corrective and preventative measures that the flooring had been sealed.

The registered provider also stated that that regular checks will be carried out of repairs required. However, the service maintenance systems remain inadequate.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective Action

1. A flooring company is organised. Due to the flooring needing to be replaced, the service would need to close. We are proposing doing this while closed for Christmas holidays?
2. Fencing has been repainted.
3. Leak has been fixed.

Preventive Action

Maintenance log is in place.

Summary Comment

The response from the registered provider has been accepted. Assurance has been provided that the flooring will be carried out during the Christmas Holidays 2023. Evidence was submitted to demonstrate that maintenance of outdoor fence has been completed and the water leak was fixed by the plumber. Regulation 29 has not been addressed in full as the flooring remains unchanged. Regulation 29 will be reviewed at the next inspection.