

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CN056
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Name of Service:	Stepping Stones Pre School Ltd
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Address of Service:	River Street, Cavan, Co. Cavan
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Eircode:	H12 H5F6
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Name of Registered Provider:	Marice Graham
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Service type:	Part Time
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Date(s) of Inspection:	05/10/2023
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No of pre-school children:	AM	62	PM	8
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Family Resource Centre, Commons Road, Navan, Co. Meath
Inspection undertaken by:	C Tunney
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	Not Applicable
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Description of service

Steeping Stones Pre-school is a non-profit community based childcare facility in operation since 1997. The service is located within Cavan town, easily accessible to the community. The service provides part time and sessional education and care to pre-school children aged 2 years to 6 years. The service participates in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme and operates from 09:00am to 13:00 hrs Monday to Friday and caters for a maximum of 79 children.

Staffing

There are eleven staff employed in the service including one manager, one deputy and nine childcare staff. All staff work directly with pre-school children. The registered provider is not involved in the day to day running of the service and was not present for the inspection.

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 and safety. Inspections may also focus on other areas as required.

These findings are outlined within the relevant regulation(s) within this report.

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 Manager, 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.

(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.

Compliance Information

(1) (a) A manager was appointed as the person-in-charge and a named person who can deputise when required was available. The registered provider was not present for the inspection.

(b) Staff rosters and staff sign in records were available for inspection and indicated that the person-in-charge and/or the named person who can deputise are on the premises during the hours of operation of the service.

(c) Staff members were aware of the management structure in the service, the lines of authority and accountability and the specific roles and responsibilities of each employee.

(2) Eleven staff files were reviewed.

(a) Eleven written past employer references were available and validated.

(b) In the absence of past employer references, 11 references from a source other than an employer was available

(c) Eleven staff files reviewed had the required garda vetting documents available for inspection.

(d) Three staff members had the required international police vetting available for inspection.

(4) Nine staff members providing direct care to pre-school children had documentation to show that they held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 or above on the National Qualifications Framework or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

(7) The manager had systems in place to ensure staff are appropriately supervised and provided with appropriate support, information, and training including the policies, procedures and statements of the service specified in Schedule 5.

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 were an adequate number of adults working directly with the children on the day of inspection. The children were attending the service on a sessional or part-time basis.

(2)

- Room 1, there were 6 children aged between 2 years 11 months old being cared for by 1 staff member, of which 1 child attended for part time day care. The manager also provided support in this room.
- Room 2, there were 21 children aged between 3 years to 4 years and 5 months old being cared for by 3 staff members, of which 2 children attended for part time day care.
- Room 3, there were 19 children aged between 3 to 6 years old being cared for by 2 staff members of which 2 children attended for part time day care. Additionally, a staff member providing access and inclusion support (AIM) were also available.
- Room 4, there were 16 children aged between 3 to 6 years old being cared for by 2 staff members of which 3 children attended for part time 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 reported hours of attendance/ sign in which were available for inspection.

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:

- (a) the name, position, qualifications and experience of the person in charge and of every other employee, unpaid worker and contractor;*
- (b) details of the class of service and the age profile of children for which the service is registered to provide services;*
- (c) details of the adult:child ratios in the service;*
- (d) the type of care or programme provided in the service;*
- (e) the facilities available;*
- (f) the opening hours and fees;*
- (g) the policies, procedures and statements the service is required to maintain in accordance with Regulation 10;*
- (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.*

(3) A record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection on the premises, and the documents and records referred to in paragraph (2)(a) shall be open to inspection whether on the premises or elsewhere, by an authorised person.

Compliance Information

(1) Records were available as specified by Regulation 16 (a)(b) (c) (d)(e)(f)(g) (h)(i) (j)(k) in relation to the service were available for inspection.

These records were available in folders such as a folder containing the service policies and procedures, individual staff folders which included training records and staff details. Information in relation to staff names and qualifications were displayed for the attention of staff and parents/guardians.

(3) Records were open to inspection by an authorised person. All records requested by the inspector were made available.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 17 – Information for parents

A registered provider shall ensure that a parent or guardian of a child proposing to attend the service is provided with the information referred to in subparagraphs (a) to (g) of Regulation 16(1).

Compliance Information

There was evidence that parent's and guardian receive information as specified in Regulation 16 ((a)to (g). Parents and guardians were welcome into the pre-school which the inspector observed at collection time. Staff appear to have professional relationships with the children's parents and guardians. The inspector used an opportunity to meet three parents who stated their children have settled and progressing well in the pre-school.

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

- The children's basic care needs were met on the day of inspection. The service promoted healthy eating, food and snacks were provided by the parents/guardians. Children's drinks were available within their reach which they could access as they wished.
- The staff members were sensitive and responsive in promoting positive behaviours. Children were encouraged to share, the adults supported children to find positive solutions when they experienced challenges in sharing play equipment and materials as some of the children were settling into their new pre-school environment.
- Children were encouraged and facilitated to move freely between the care room to engage in play material of their choice.

- The children were encouraged to be independent, suitable to their age and stage of development. Assistance was given as required.
- Child led care was noted, a child who displayed tiredness was facilitated to rest which met the child's care needs.

SUPPORTING RELATIONSHIPS

- Staff members sat at the tables and engaged in social conversation with the children, promoting a relaxed atmosphere and sat beside children who needed additional encouragement and support during snack time.
- Staff members were observed to chat at the door with parents at collection time. In each room there was a family and birthday wall on display promoting a sense of identity and belonging for the children attending the service.
- Staff members were observed responding promptly to the verbal and non-verbal cues of each child. They were observed being kind and respectful to all children by using their name, and gentle vocal tones when speaking to children. Children were encouraged to take part in activities and afforded opportunities to make choices. The children approached the staff members easily for assistance.
- Curriculum planning was evident in each room to promote the children's learning and relationship building. The theme of the week was "Beep Beep" and road safety. A visit from An Garda Síochána was planned for the following day. The children's interests were included in curriculum planning where an emergent interest board was noted in each room where specific children's interest was documented. The outcome of the weekly themes was documented in the children's journals and shared with parents/guardians.

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

- There was adequate and suitable furniture and play equipment available for the children. Each room had a range of play-based materials and that offered stimulation, exploration, and imaginative play. The play materials and equipment were positioned at an accessible level on open shelving which nurtured independence, facilitated choice, and encouraged curiosity, spontaneous play, and movement.
- Play material included construction areas, small world areas, play kitchen with support material, activity /manipulation toys, dress up clothes and a beauty set.
- Each room had a theme which encouraged imaginary play, conversation, and interactive play which included a role play kitchen, which included pots, construction areas/a garage, puzzles, table top activities and arts and crafts.
- A range of books were available in the cozy reading areas which supported children’s language and development.
- Each room was brightly coloured and decorated with the children’s art work.
- The covered outdoor space in the centre of the building had a space to extend the children’s imaginative play and engage in sensory play. Materials included a sand and water area, planting area, a musical/ band area and a small wooden kitchen area with support material.

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 entrance door leading into the premises was appropriately secured to prevent the children from exiting unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the premises.
- Fire doors throughout the building were unobstructed.
- Cleaning agents were stored safely out of the reach of children.
- Accidents and incidents were recorded and documented correctly.
- First aid boxes were positioned in each room.

Infection Control:

- Warm water, liquid soap and paper hand towels were provided to support effective hand hygiene in the sanitary accommodation in the service.
- The children were facilitated to wash their hands before eating and following personal care.
- The standard of cleaning throughout the pre-school was satisfactory. There was evidence that daily cleaning schedules were carried out effectively.

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 system was in place to record the arrival and departure times for each child attending the service on a daily basis.

(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 as the inspector was requested to record her time of arrival and departure.

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

(1) The registered provider ensured that an adequate number of staff members were trained in First Aid Responder (FAR).

(2) (a) A First aid box was available in each room, was safely stored in an easily accessible and conspicuous position on the premises.

(b) A First aid box was available to the children attending the pre-school service at all times.

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)) A written record was available of the fire drills completed in the service. The last recorded fire drill took place on the 21/09/2023.
- (b) A record was kept of the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment which was last serviced on the 26/09/2023 and the smoke alarms on the 20/01/2023.
- (4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire was conspicuously displayed on the premises.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The registered provider ensured the service was insured. The insurance certificate provided for review showed an expiry date of 27/03/2024.