

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CN062
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Name of Service:	Tiny Steps Pre-School
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Address of Service:	Tullacmongan Resource Centre, Killymooney Drive, Killymooney, Co. Cavan
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Eircode:	H12 W0V2
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Name of Registered Provider:	Patricia Walsh
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	17/02/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	25	PM	-
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Hampton Court, Cootehill Road, Drumalee, Co Cavan. H12 YY84
Inspection undertaken by:	S Mc Kenna
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

Tiny Steps Pre-school is a community based early years' service located within the Tullacmongan resource centre. The childcare service provides a sessional care to children aged 2 to 6 years. The service operates from 9am to 12 midday Monday to Friday. Four care rooms are provided, which are named The Hall, The Preschool, The Back Room and The Prefab. A school aged service is also provided. Two designated outdoor play areas are located to the rear of the premises. Additionally, the pre-school has access to the community football pitches and playground located adjacent to the pre-school. Car parking is available to the front of the building.

Staffing

There are thirteen staff employed in the service, eleven of whom work directly with the children. Of the eleven staff, four are employed under the Access and Inclusion Model and one staff works on a community employment scheme. Two staff are employed as a childcare cook and a caretaker. The registered provider is not centre 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 unannounced and focused on the area of governance/ health, welfare and development of child and safety. The inspection 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 23 Safeguarding

Health, Safety and Welfare of Child, Regulation 24 Checking in and Out and Record of Attendance, Regulation 25 First Aid and Regulation 28 Insurance.

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 deputy 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 service had a designated person in charge, and a named person to deputise in their absence.

(b) Following discussion with the deputy person in charge it was confirmed that when the preschool service was in operation the designated person in charge or a named person in charge is on the premises.

(2) The staff files for 13 staff were reviewed.

(a) A total of 17 written and validated references from a previous employer were on file.

(b) A total of 9 written and validated references from a reputable source were on file.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for 13 staff. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years for ten staff members.

(d) A review of the employment history for the 13 staff, demonstrated that 2 staff had lived outside the State for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months. The required police vetting for one staff was available on file.

(4) Documentary evidence was available to confirm that the 11 staff employed to work directly with children, held an appropriate childcare qualification at Level 5 or above on the National Framework of Qualifications, or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent. A childcare qualification for the cook and caretaker is not required.

Non-Compliance Information

(2) (d) There was no police vetting on file for one staff member who had lived outside the State for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

Police vetting was obtained for the staff member who lived outside the state. All staff that require police vetting will have police vetting in place prior to commencement of work.

Supporting documentation submitted

Copy of police vetting.

Summary Comment

The response from the registered provider has addressed the non-compliance in Regulation 9 (2) (d).

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) On the day of inspection there was an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the pre-school service.

(3) The adult to child ratios were correct in the service when the inspector arrived unannounced and remained so throughout the inspection. The following adult to child ratios were observed:

Six adults cared for 14 children in the Hall, which included children that attend the Hall Room and the Preschool Room.

One adult cared for 5 children in the Back Room.

Two adults cared for 6 children in the Prefab Room.

The children present on the day of inspection were aged 3 years 3 months to 4 years 11 months.

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

The following examples demonstrate how the registered provider ensured that the children's learning, development and well-being was facilitated within the daily life of the service:

Basic Needs

The atmosphere in the care rooms upon the inspectors arrival were warm and welcoming. The children were observed to be engaged in free play activities such as physical play on ride on trucks in the hall, playing in the sensory room and taking part in table top and colouring activities.

The staff team were observed to use gentle tones while interacting with the children, and the children were observed to seek out staff when they needed supports.

Breakfast and a morning snack are provided onsite by the service which includes toast upon arrival, and sandwiches, chopped fruit and some vegetables for morning snack time. Children take in their own drink cup which is readily available to them throughout their day.

The older children were observed to use the toilet independently. Younger children who were in the process of being toilet trained had their pull ups changed by staff as required in the designated sanitary area.

Each child had spare clothing within the service. Aprons were provided and observed in use for messy play activities such as water play and painting.

Cosy areas were provided in each of the care rooms which included soft mats and cushions, where children could rest and take time out from their play.

Supporting Relationships

On the day of the inspection the deputy person in charge informed the inspector that the number of children in attendance was lower than normal and that the Hall room and the Preschool room were joined together for the day in the Hall. Minimal staff change over was observed, with children observed to be familiar with all staff who cared for them, including the two rooms when joined.

The staff were observed to praise children where positive interactions with their friends were observed, such as when turn taking and sharing occurred. The staff praised the children for their thoughtfulness in caring for their friends. Where small disagreements occurred, the staff used age-appropriate strategies and used discussions with the children to come up with a positive solution to any problems they encountered.

The staff were observed to work well together and demonstrated sensitivity, warmth and positive regard for children and their families, treating each child with respect and acknowledging parental wishes and children's dietary and personal care requirements.

Communication with parents occurs upon arrival and collection each day. Staff advised the inspector that scheduled parent meetings occur once a year or more often if required. The staff advised that the meetings are used as an opportunity for the parents to review their children's progress during the year, have a look at their child's individual folders and work, and to discuss any concerns they may have. A private Facebook page and email is also used to communicate with parents.

Physical And Material Environment

The indoor care rooms were bright and welcoming. The care rooms had similar interest areas set up to include home corners with dolls and equipment, cosy areas with books, small world farms garages and houses along with relevant small play toys. Creative areas, table top sections, construction areas, chalkboards, painting easels, fidget toys with sensory materials, role play areas with dress up clothing were also available.

The rooms were spacious and laid out to allow free movement of children from one area to another.

Materials and equipment were stored at a level easily accessible to the children in attendance, encouraging children to seek out materials that they wanted and then to easily place them back at tidy up times.

Displays on the care room walls included family photos, birthday displays, recent art activities and emerging interest displays.

The children in the Prefab room were observed to enjoy floor play games, role play and dress up, table top toys and colouring activities. The children in the Back room were observed to enjoy the hairdresser role play area, colouring activities where they talked about their favourite movies with the staff and also discussed their favourite colours with the inspector. The children in the Hall and the Preschool room were observed to enjoy playing in the sensory room, water play activities, role play in the home corner, sensory table top play and using the ride on toys and footballs.

The tables and chairs observed in use were suitable for the age and stage of development of the children in attendance.

There are two designated outdoor areas for use by the service to include a small soft surfaced area enclosed by walls, wooden fencing and a locked gate, and a larger wall, fenced and gated area which is partly covered to include a concrete area and an artificial grass section. A mud kitchen, table and chairs, play houses, ride on toys and a slide was some of the equipment available in the larger area.

Programme of Activities

A keyworker system was in place, which included compiling folders of children's own art activities, along with observations and photos. Evidence of an emergent curriculum was provided through the use of "visual learning walls" in each of the care rooms, which included photos of the children and comments about their interests, which is used to inform the curriculum planning. The short and medium term curriculum planning included seasonal themes such as winter and Valentines, while also allowing for flexibility to include the children's current interests.

Play materials available provided various levels of play opportunities such as table top toys, connecting toys and jigsaws available in both small and more complex options.

The majority of the activities and free play observed was child led, with children seen to make their own choices throughout their play and learning, while being closely supported by the staff where needed.

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 following safety measures were observed on the day of inspection:

- The premises were appropriately secured upon the inspectors arrival and remained so throughout the inspection, which prevented a child from exiting unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the premises.
- An intercom to notify staff of adult presence was at each of the two entrances.
- The garden areas were secured by high walls, fencing and lockable gates.
- The children were observed to be appropriately supervised on the day of inspection.
- The play equipment and materials used by the children on the day were observed to be maintained in good repair. Floor coverings were maintained in good repair.
- Risk assessments were completed daily, with up-to-date records available for review.
- The kitchen remained inaccessible to the children during the inspection. Storage areas were inaccessible to the children. Cleaning materials were stored up high and out of the reach of the children.

Infection Control:

The inspector observed the following infection control measures in practice within the service:

- Warm running water, hand soap, pedal operated bins and single use paper towels were provided at hand washing areas. The children were observed to wash their hands after cleaning their noses, before eating and after using the toilet.
- Tables were observed to be cleaned before snack time.
- The care rooms and sanitary areas were well ventilated through openable windows and trickle vents.
- Prepared snack items were stored in the fridge until snack time.
- Cleaning schedules were on display and completed up to date. The service was maintained in a clean and hygienic manner throughout.

Administration of Medication:

- Staff outlined the procedure for administering medication. Records reviewed included prior parental consent, child's name, medication, storage, dosage, administration route and frequency, along with two staff signatures and parental signatures upon collection each day.
- Individual care plans that were required, were stored on file and available for review.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

Garda vetting was available for 13 staff members. However, three of these vetting disclosures were not dated within the previous three years in adherence to with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice 'EYI-RN12.3 Renewal of Garda Vetting'.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

Renewal of Garda vetting for 3 staff members was applied for on the day of inspection and received. A system has been set up for easy checking of staff garda vetting and renewal dates.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

Copies of update garda vetting.

Summary Comment

The response from the registered provider has addressed the non-compliance in Regulation 23.

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 staff were observed to use written records which detailed each child's arrival and departure time on a daily basis.

(3) (a) The staff ensured that only preschool children, a person dropping or collecting a preschool child, an employee or unpaid worker can enter the premises upon approval by a staff member.

(b) A visitor log book was maintained and was available for review.

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 a person who held in-date First Aid Response (FAR) training was at all times immediately available to the children attending the pre-school service. Six staff, five of whom were present on the day of inspection held in-date FAR training certificates.
- (2) (a) & (b) Suitably equipped first aid boxes were available in each of the care rooms and were stored in accessible and conspicuous locations out of the reach of children.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The registered provider had insurance cover in place for 60 pre-school children attending the service on a Sessional basis. The policy showed that the service had insurance in place from 28/03/2024 to 27/03/2025.