

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CW016
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Name of Service:	Forward Steps Resource Centre
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Address of Service:	Chapel Lane, Tullow, Co. Carlow
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Eircode:	R93 CY68
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Name of Registered Provider:	Siobhra Flynn
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	15/05/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	30	PM	N/A
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Tusla Child and Family Agency, Early Years Inspectorate, Ely Hospital, Wexford.
Inspection undertaken by:	E Mc Garry
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

Forward Steps is a sessional service located in Tullow Co Carlow. An Early Years Care and Education (ECCE) scheme is provided to children aged 2 to 6 years of age. The service is open from 09:00 to 12:00 for 45 weeks per year. The service operates an afternoon session from 13:50hrs to 17:45hrs during July and August. The service is also registered to provide a school age service. The service is operated from two buildings in the grounds of the resource center. It consists of two early years rooms, toilets, nappy changing facilities and two outdoor play areas.

Staffing

There are 12 staff employed in the service. The registered provider does not work directly with the children. All staff who were working directly with the children held an award in Early childhood Care and Education at Level 5 or above on the National Qualifications Framework.

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.

Regulation 9 Management and recruitment

Regulation 10 Policies and procedures

Regulation 11 Staffing levels

Regulation 15 Record of preschool child,
Regulation 17 Information for parents,
Regulation 19 Care and welfare of the child,
Regulation 22 Food and Drink,
Regulation 23 Safeguarding health, safety, and welfare of child,
Regulation 25 First aid,
Regulation 26 Fire Safety,
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 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.

(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;
- (b) Part VIIA (inserted by section 92 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013 (No. 40 of 2013)) of the Act, and
- (c) these Regulations.

Compliance Information

(1)(a)(b)

There was a staff member who identified themselves as the person in charge on the arrival of the inspector. The manager arrived shortly after to facilitate the inspection. The rota demonstrated that the manager or the person in charge was in the service on the majority of days the service was operating.

(2)(a)(b)

Following a discussion with the manager and on review of documentation, it was established that there were 12 staff employed in the service. All written and required references were available on file for staff working in the service.

(c)
There was Garda vetting available on file in the service for all staff members. The service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate regulatory notice to renew Garda vetting every 3 years for 10 staff. See regulation 23 for additional information.

(d)
Police vetting was available on file for four staff members who had lived in a state other than Ireland for a period of longer than six consecutive months.

(4)
There were qualifications on file for all staff working directly with preschool children. These staff held an award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 and above on the National Qualifications Framework.

(7)
The manager had ensured that all employees were appropriately supervised and provided with adequate information to carry out their roles in the service. Staff who spoke to the inspector were clear in their understanding of the policies and procedures in place in the service. For example, staff were aware of the behaviour management policy in place in the service. There was evidence of the induction policy for new staff in place in the service. There was a check list of all the required training and induction required for new staff who had commenced working in the service since the last inspection.

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

here were written policies, procedures and statements, as specified in Schedule 5, available for the service. The policies reviewed for this inspection were the healthy eating policy and the policy on behaviour management in the service. These policies and procedures were specific to the setting.

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)
There was an adequate number of staff working directly with the children attending the service for the duration of the inspection.
- (3)
There were 30 children aged 2 to 6 years of age in the care of 6 staff. The manager of the service arrived at 11:10 and was available to assist with the children present.

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 was a registration form available in respect of each child enrolled in the service. A sample of 10 forms completed by the parents were reviewed as part of the inspection process and were found to contain all the information required under parts (a) – (i) of this regulation

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 information for parents on the running of the service. This information was available in a hard copy for parents. The copy was reviewed by the inspector. The service provided parents with information as required under regulation 17. The information booklet provided for parents contained an outline of the curriculum, the hours of operation, contact details and the facilities available within the service. There was also information included on the day to day running of the service.

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

(1)(a)

The manager had ensured that each child's learning, development and well-being was 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.

The staff were engaged with the children at all times during the period of inspection. The children were observed playing in the outdoor play area situated to the front of the service. This area consisted of a mud kitchen, goal posts, small child sized houses, picnic benches and a new jungle gym. This gym contained a tree house, swings and a climbing rope. The area had grass growing and was safe, suitable and secure. Staff were observed to be enthusiastic with the children playing in the outdoor area. For example, pretending the floor was lava with the children on the grass area. Staff ensured the children were prepared for the warm weather and were observed to ensure they were wearing their sun hats. Staff were observed reapplying sun cream as it was a particularly sunny day.

There was an outdoor sheltered area situated directly beside the rear entrance to the service. This area was roofed and open to the elements on both sides. Staff who spoke to the inspector said the sheltered area was used when it was raining to allow the children to enjoy outdoor play even when it was raining.

Both preschool rooms were well laid out with thought given to the ages of the children attending. Areas of interest such as the home corner were resourced with quality miniature equipment for the children to play with. There was a variety of art displayed on the wall. Staff had taken the time to interpret some of the drawings made by the children. One was entitled this is my daddy, another, this is an elephant.

There was a selection of toys stored in labelled containers on easily accessible shelves in both preschool rooms. There were plastic bricks, animals, and farm equipment.

The rest areas in both rooms were cosy and inviting to the children. They consisted of large soft mats and low sized couches. There was also a supply of books for the children to read across both rooms.

A sensory room situated in the main resource building had been established since the last inspection. This room had dim lighting and had been fitted with specialist lighting to aid relaxation such as a large bubble lamp and soft lighting which a person lying on a bean bag could relax and watch as the lights rotated across the ceiling of the room.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 22 – Food and drink

A registered provider shall ensure that adequate and suitable, nutritious and varied food and drink is available for each pre-school child attending the pre-school service.

Compliance Information

The service had a healthy eating policy. The service provided all the snacks for the children. On arrival the children were observed enjoying their snack. Staff had prepared platters of food for the children present. There was

sweetcorn, toast, cucumbers, oranges and a choice of milk or water. There was plenty of food available for all the children. There was a 2-week menu available on display of various snacks provided for the children.

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

The manager took the following measures to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of the children attending the service:

GENERAL SAFETY

The entrance gate was locked to prevent children leaving unaccompanied and unauthorised people gaining access to the service. All cleaning agents were stored in a safe and secure area which was inaccessible to children.

INFECTION CONTROL

There was warm thermostatically controlled water, liquid soap, disposable hand towels and foot pedal bins available throughout the service. Good hand washing practice was observed on the day of inspection. Children were observed washing their hands after using the toilet.

Administration of medication

The service had an administration of medication policy. The policy was reviewed by the inspector and was found to contain the required aspects for the safe administration of medication in a preschool setting.

Outings

There was a policy on the management of outings in the service. This included the elements of the required planning and resources required to ensure the safety of the children attending the service. For example, a risk assessment was carried out prior the outing, the required staff to children's ratios and the first aid training and equipment needed to facilitate the outing.

Non-Compliance Information

The service had not demonstrated compliance with the requirement to have all Garda vetting renewed every 3 years for 2 staff members. It is acknowledged the inspector received confirmation the manager had applied for the re-vetting of these 2 staff members shortly after the inspection.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

The inspector has received renewed Garda vetting for both staff. The service will ensure all required Garda vetting is renewed every 3 years as required going forward.

Summary Comment

The response and evidence submitted is satisfactory to meet the requirements of The Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016.

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)
There was a person trained in a first aid responder course available to the children. There were six staff trained in a first aid responder course working in the service.

(2)(a)(b)
There was a suitably equipped first aid box stored in an easily accessible and conspicuous position on the premises and was available to the children.

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)

There was a record of fire drills that had taken place in the service. The last fire drill was recorded as having taken place in May 2025.

(b)

The annual record of the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment was carried out in May 2025. The annual maintenance of the smoke alarm in the premises was carried out in January 2025.

(4)

There was a notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of fire displayed in a conspicuous position in the preschool rooms and the main entrance in the resource center.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

There was adequate insurance in place to cover the number of children the service was registered to accommodate.