

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

<b>TUSLA Identifier:</b>	TU2015DL134		
<b>Name of Service:</b>	St. Johnston Stepping Stones Ltd		
<b>Address of Service:</b>	Chapel Rd, St Johnston, Co. Donegal		
<b>Eircode:</b>	F93 VHK7		
<b>Name of Registered Provider:</b>	Deborah Clawson		
<b>Service type:</b>	Sessional		
<b>Date of Inspection:</b>	25/02/2025		
<b>No of pre-school children:</b>	AM	33	PM -
<b>Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:</b>	Donegal Early Years Inspectorate, St. Conal's Campus, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal. F95 XK94		
<b>Inspection undertaken by:</b>	L Mc Glynn		
<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>	Not applicable		

### Description of service

St. Johnston Stepping Stones is a community run preschool located on the ground floor of the local family resource centre. The service is registered to provide sessional preschool care to children aged 2 to 6 years and operates from 9.00am to 12.00md each weekday.

The premises is accessed via the main entrance of the family resource centre and consists of two care rooms, interconnected by a kitchen, sanitary accommodation and a lobby area. A large outdoor area is accessible from both care rooms.

### Staffing

There are nine staff members employed to work in the service which includes the service manager, six staff members working directly with the children, one staff member employed as part of an employment activation programme and one relief staff member. The registered provider does not work in the service on a daily basis. There is a named person in charge and a named person to deputise if required.

### 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. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

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

*(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*

*(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

(2) The vetting files for all nine staff members were reviewed on this inspection and the following was deemed to meet the requirements of the regulation.

(a) (b) There were two references on file from a past employer, or a source other than a past employer for the nine staff members.

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

(4) Documentary evidence was provided to demonstrate that the eight staff members who required it, had obtained a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at level 5 or above on the National Framework of Qualifications.

### 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 adults working directly with the children throughout the inspection.
- (3) There were six adults working in the service with 33 children aged 2 to 5 years. In the Rainbow room, three adults cared for 16 children. One additional adult was present who was participating on an employment activation programme. In the Sunshine room, three adults cared for 17 children. The service manager was also on site and working between the two care rooms providing support where required. There were two adults, one in each room, employed as part of the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM).

### 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

Children's food and drink were provided from home. It was evident in the snacks provided for the children that an ethos of healthy eating was promoted in the service. Children were observed enjoying filled sandwiches, wraps and bread rolls with fresh fruit yoghurts and other dairy produce. Children also brought their own water drinks from home. Individually labelled hooks were provided for children's personal belongings and children were independent in hanging up their own coats and returning possessions to their bag. The children were independent regarding their toileting needs and were able to access the toilets whenever they needed including when playing

outdoors. Children requiring assistance were sensitively supported. Boxes of tissues were provided for wiping noses and waterproof aprons were available for indoor messy play activities.

The play environment in both rooms were well thought out and encouraged a variety of physical movement between tabletop work, floor play, play with movement and outdoor play involving cycling, running and climbing. Staff members used simple rules and clear guidance to help children work and play together. Staff also demonstrated knowledge of children's different personalities and implemented effective strategies in managing some challenging behaviour. Timers were used to provide a visual aid for children when disputes about sharing toys or equipment arose. The daily routine, which was in picture form on the walls, incorporated routines that required children to listen to others, to wait in turn and engage in small roles of responsibility.

The staff team was observed to work well together in implementing the planned activities and routine for the day. Individual roles were displayed on a whiteboard in each room and staff regularly communicated with each other to meet the needs of children throughout the day. An electronic application system was used to communicate regular updates on the services activities and details of their child's learning and development to parents and general update newsletter was issued monthly.

The play equipment and materials provided in the care rooms were appropriate for facilitating children's learning and development. These included role and pretend play resources such as a well-stocked home play kitchen area; baby care resources; dressing up props and small world toys such as the train table, play animals, transport toys, and dolls house to name some. Construction blocks, jigsaws, shape sorters, paper cutting, peg boards and other manipulative play items encouraged children to use problem solving and manipulative skills. Open ended, creative and sensorial resources included a water and sand trays, moulding dough, painting and collage resources and items made of natural materials and loose parts. Paints, crayons, pencils, the chalk board and items that encouraged fine hand movements supported the development of prewriting skills. The display of attractive picture story books in the library area encouraged an early interest in reading which together with the variety of play resources provided opportunities for children to expand their vocabulary and language skills.

All children were observed playing in the outdoor area on the day of inspection. Children had access to a variety of play and learning experiences in a subdivided outdoor area. One area contained an open yard for ride on toys and a separate enclosed section which was roofed and fitted with a synthetic soft surface. The roofed over area contained a climbing frame incorporating a slide. A larger open-air area contained shelters areas in the form of a wooden playhouse and gazebo, a swing set with wooden ramps and winding pathways through grass and bark areas. Two additional areas provided opportunities for digging with gravel ground surfacing and an area with mud kitchens and play props.

## 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 was appropriately secured so that children could not exit unsupervised, or adults could not enter without permission. The entrance from the main building was secured with a bell system in place to alert staff to visitors or parents. The outdoor play area was bordered by surround fencing and entry points were secured.
- The cleaning products and equipment were securely stored in locations out of children's reach.
- The play equipment and play materials both indoors and outdoors in use on the day were noted to be in good repair and did not pose a risk of injury.
- There were no trailing flexes or electric hazards that children could access.
- Impact absorbing mats were provided at the tall climb and slide unit.

##### Infection Control:

- Suitable hand washing facilities were provided with supplies of soap dispensers, disposable paper towels, warm water and waste bins at each wash hand basin. Both adults and children were observed washing their hands regularly during the morning session.
- Foot pedal-operated bins were available throughout the service.
- Cleaning records and risk assessments were maintained and noted to completed up to date. The care rooms and sanitary accommodation were clean and well maintained.
- Children's lunches in the rainbow room were stored in refrigerated conditions prior to eating. In consultation with external professionals, staff in the sunshine room had begun storing children's lunches in the room with a procedure in place to ensure that they would be consumed within a specific timeframe. It was agreed in discussion with the inspector that they would revert to storing lunches in the refrigerator and evidence of same was submitted following the inspection.

##### Administration of Medication:

- The person in charge confirmed that medication has not been administered to the current children attending service to date. Consent for the administration of specific medication to individual children or

general anti-febrile medication was given by parents on enrolment and records were available for staff to use in the event that medication would be required by a child at any stage.

### Fire Safety:

- Records of regular fire drills were available, and all emergency exits were free from obstruction.

## 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) Certification of appropriate training in first aid for children was available for three staff members working in the service.

(2)(a)(b) An adequately stocked first aid box was located in the office which was readily accessible to staff if required.

## 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) Fire drills were recorded and noted to be carried out monthly.
- (b) A record of the maintenance of the smoke alarm system and firefighting equipment was maintained. The smoke alarm maintenance record was dated in November 2024 and the firefighting equipment in March 2024.
- (4) A notice of the procedure to follow in the event of a fire was displayed in the central lobby area.