

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015DS076
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Name of Service:	Stepping Stones Creche & Montessori
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Address of Service:	30 The Belfry Crescent, City West, Tallaght, Dublin 24, Co. Dublin
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Name of Registered Provider:	Maureen Butler-Irwin
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Service type:	Part Time
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Dates of Inspection:	07/11/2023
	08/11/2023

No of pre-school children:	07/11/2023	AM	50	PM	22
	08/11/2023		51		n/a

Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Tusla Child and Family Agency, 7th Floor, Brunel Building, Heuston South Quarter, Dublin 8.
Inspection undertaken by:	E. Mulhern and S. Quigley
Title:	Early Years Inspectors

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

Stepping Stones Creche & Montessori is located in a residential area of south west county Dublin. A morning and afternoon sessional service is offered to children aged 2-6 years with the option for part-time care between 8:30am and 3:30pm. The premises consist of a two storey, purpose-built building with four child-care rooms and an outdoor area.

Staffing

There are 12 staff employed to work in the service including the registered provider. All staff are qualified to work directly with the children.

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 areas of governance/ health, welfare and development of child/ safety/ notifications and complaints. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulations 19(1)(a) & (3), 23 and 27. As a result, the scope of the inspection included the Daisy and Snow Drops room, Tulips room and Roses room.

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 inspectors wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the person in charge, staff and children who were present on the days 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,

(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.

(3) The procedures specified in paragraph (2) shall be carried out prior to any person being appointed, assigned or allowed access to or contact with a child attending the pre-school service.

(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:

- (c) these Regulations

Compliance Information

- (1)
- (a) The service had a person in charge and a named person to deputise as required.
 - (b) The named deputy was on the premises throughout the inspection. The staff roster provided for the person in charge or deputy to be present at all times of opening.

- (2)
- (a) & (b) Through review of records it was evident that adequate consideration had been given to references for all staff members. References had been sourced from their past employers and from another source where they had only one or no previous employers. Records were available of phone calls made to verify the references.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures were available for all adults.
- (d) Through review of records it was evident that international police vetting had been considered for all staff whom it was required.
- (3) One adult had been employed since the previous inspection. Documents evidenced that the procedures specified in paragraph (2) had been carried out prior to the adult commencing work in the service.
- (4) Records were available evidencing that all staff held 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)(c) The inspection focused on the supervision and training of staff in relation to regulation 19 - Health, Welfare and Development of Child. Staff told inspectors that they undertake regular supervision meetings with management in keeping with the services supervision policy. Records of these meetings were available which included discussions on how to best meet the needs of the group and individual children in the staff member's care. Management and staff told the inspectors about training they had recently undertaken with Better Start (National Early Years Quality Development Initiative). Staff demonstrated to the inspectors the initiatives that had been implemented since the training including adapting the environment to make play equipment and materials easily accessible to children and following the child's lead in relation to learning and play. Management told the inspectors about plans that are in place for further quality development in this area with support of Better Start.

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.

Compliance Information

(1) An adequate number of staff were always working directly with the children. There were 10 staff allocated to work directly with 50 children on the first day of inspection and 51 children on the second day of inspection. The deputy person in charge was available to assist as needed on both days.

(2) At all times the minimum required ratio of adults to children was maintained.

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:

(k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.

Compliance Information

(1)(k) Records were available of accidents and incidents involving children while attending the service. A parent/guardian signature was recorded evidencing the record had been communicated with them.

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.

(3) A registered provider shall ensure that no practices that are disrespectful, degrading, exploitive, intimidating, emotionally or physically harmful or neglectful are carried out in respect of a pre-school child whilst attending the service.

Compliance Information

(1)(a) The inspectors observed that the children's learning, development, and well-being was supported by the environment and the staff. Areas were laid out to support the children's independence. There was a variety of equipment and materials including books and puzzles visible and accessible to the children on open shelves. There were clearly defined interest areas including construction areas, art and craft areas, sand areas and home corners.

Areas with soft seating and cushions were available for children to rest or take a break from activities. The outdoor area was spacious. There was equipment to support full-body movement and a range of play experiences including a climbing frame, slides and ride-on toys. The inspectors observed the children moving freely and engaging in free-play and activities of their choice.

Children were supported to be independent with their personal care. The children used the toilet as they needed with staff reminding and assisting them to wash their hands afterwards. The staff supported the children to put on their coats and hats when going outside appropriate to the weather. The children brought food and drinks from home and sat together when eating.

Staff demonstrated warmth and respect towards the children, listening to them and providing comfort when they became upset. The staff assisted a child who was transitioning into the service by speaking softly to her, reassuring her, and using distraction techniques. This included taking her to the outdoor area while the other children were finishing lunch. The staff communicated with parents/guardians via an app and when children were arriving or leaving.

(3) The inspectors did not observe any practices which could be harmful to the children. Staff demonstrated respect for the children through their language and manner and supported them with their care needs. The service had a policy for managing children’s behaviour including challenging behaviour. This outlined appropriate steps to take according to the child’s age and stage of development. The policy outlined practices which are prohibited and could be harmful to a child. Staff demonstrated an awareness of the policy and the procedures for managing challenging behaviour in a positive and respectful manner including engagement with the child’s parent/guardian when required.

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 registered provider had taken measures to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of the children as outlined in the examples below:

General Safety:

- Entrances/exits were secured to prevent unauthorised access or a child leaving unsupervised.
- Cleaning products were stored safely out of reach of children.
- Heavy furniture was secured to prevent tipping.
- Cables and blind cords were secured out of reach of children.

Infection Control:

- Sanitary facilities were equipped with warm water, liquid soap, and paper towels for handwashing.
- Children’s hands were washed prior to eating to help prevent the spread of infection.
- The Pre-school rooms and sanitary facilities were observed to be in a clean condition.
- Children’s soothers were stored in individually labelled containers.
- The kitchen door was kept closed to prevent children accessing the hazards within.
- Pedal operated, lidded bins were available for the safe disposal of waste.

Administration of Medication:

- Parent/guardian consent had been obtained for medications which had been given to children attending the service.
- Medication was stored appropriately in the original packaging out of reach of children.
- A documented plan was available for the administration of medicine to a child who required it daily. Staff demonstrated a good understanding of the steps required to give the medicine safely including checking the dose, having a second staff member present to witness, and keeping a record.

Outing:

- The deputy person in charge told the inspectors that the service does not undertake outings from the premises.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. The system for recording children's attendance posed a risk to the safe evacuation of children in the event of a fire. The service used two paper records and an electronic record for documenting the time children arrived and left the service. Children's names were recorded on some of the records and not on others. Staff told inspectors that as the service used three records it was difficult to ensure the children were signed in and out on each one. The fire evacuation procedure documented that one of the paper records is brought to undertake a roll call which was confirmed by staff. The record did not include all the children who were present. This posed a risk to the children's safety as it would not be clear what children were present in the event of a fire.

Infection Control:

2. The inspectors observed that the procedure for changing children's nappies posed a risk of spreading infection within the service. The nappy changing procedure displayed to guide staff did not indicate that gloves should be removed before re-dressing the children. The inspector observed that children were re-dressed by staff who were still wearing gloves which had been used to remove the soiled nappy. Staff did not wash their own or the children's hands after every nappy change, posing a risk of cross contamination.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. Ensure that only one method of accounting for children is used. Do not use multiple methods for recording children in and out of the setting.

Infection Control:

2. New nappy changing procedure highlighting that gloves must be removed after nappy change and prior to redressing the child. Notice in all changing areas on how to change and redress children.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

Copy of fire drill procedure indicating main roll book in service entrance to be used.

Infection Control:

Amended nappy changing procedure.

Summary Comment

The actions submitted have been deemed to appropriately address the non-compliance. Practices will be reviewed on the next inspection.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 27 – Supervision

A registered provider shall ensure that pre-school children attending the service are supervised at all times.

Compliance Information

The inspectors observed that the children were always appropriately supervised. This included when children were indoors, outdoors and using the sanitary facilities.

Part VIII - Notifications and Complaints

Regulation 32 – Complaints

- (1) A registered provider shall ensure that the complaints policy of the service specifies-
- (a) the procedure to be followed by a person for the purposes of making a complaint in relation to the service,
 - (b) the manner in which such a complaint shall be dealt with, and
 - (c) the procedures for keeping a person who makes such a complaint informed of the manner in which it is being dealt with.
- (2) A registered provider shall ensure that-
- (a) a record in writing is kept of a complaint made to the provider in respect of the pre-school service, and
 - (b) the complaint is duly dealt with in accordance with the provider's complaints policy.
- (3) A record in writing referred to in paragraph (2)(a) shall-
- (a) include the nature of the complaint and the manner in which the complaint was dealt with, and
 - (b) be open to inspection on the premises by an authorised person.

Compliance Information

- (1) The service had a complaints policy which outlined the following:
- (a) The procedure to be followed by a person to make a complaint in relation to the service.
 - (b) The way the complaint will be dealt with.
 - (c) The procedures for keeping the person who makes the complaint informed of the way it is being dealt with.
- (2)
- (a) A record was available of a recent complaint made in relation to the service.
 - (b) Records were available demonstrating the complaint was managed in accordance with the complaints policy.
- (3)
- (a) The record detailed the nature of the complaint and the way it was dealt with.
 - (b) The records were made available to the inspectors.