

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

<b>TUSLA Identifier:</b>	TU2015DS125
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<b>Name of Service:</b>	Early Steps Playgroup
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<b>Address of Service:</b>	St. Kevin's Boys School, Kilnamanagh, Tallaght, Dublin 24, Co. Dublin
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<b>Eircode:</b>	D24 A2XF
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<b>Name of Registered Provider:</b>	Vivienne Dowman
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<b>Service type:</b>	Sessional
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<b>Date of Inspection:</b>	04/12/2025
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<b>No of pre-school children:</b>	AM	17	PM	No.
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<b>Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:</b>	Level 7 Brunel Building, Heuston South Quarter, Kilmainham, D08X01F
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<b>Inspection undertaken by:</b>	R Phillips
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<b>Title:</b>	Early Years Inspector
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### 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).

<b>Conditions if applicable</b>	N/A
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### Description of service

Early Steps Playgroup is a sessional service which provides care to children aged 2 to 6 years. The service is registered to operate session 1 from 08:30 to 11:30 and session 2 from 11:30 to 14:30, Monday to Friday. The service operates from a former classroom in St. Kevin's boys' school in an urban residential area of Kilnamanagh, south Dublin. Children have access to the school grounds for outdoor play and a small designated outdoor play area outside the classroom.

### Staffing

The service currently employs three staff, including the service manager who were working directly with the children on the day of inspection. The registered provider is available as relief staff and was not present on the day of 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 areas 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 regulations:

- 9 (1)(2)(4) Management and recruitment,
- 11(1)(3) Staffing levels,

19 (1)(b) Health Welfare and Development of the child,

23 Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child,

25 (1)(2)(a)(b) First Aid, and

26 (1)(a)(b) (2)(c) (4) Fire Safety measures.

However, on inspection additional non-compliance which posed a risk was identified under Regulation 8 Notification of a change in circumstances.

These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations 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 person in charge, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

### Part II - Registration and Register

#### Regulation 8 - Notification of change in circumstances

*(1) A registered provider of a pre-school service other than a temporary pre-school service shall, subject to paragraph (3), notify the Agency in writing of any proposed change in the details in relation to the pre-school service contained in the register pursuant to section 58C(2) of the Act or Regulation 7(2) at least 60 days before it is proposed that the change would take effect.*

*(3) Where a registered provider has been unable for good and proper reason to notify the Agency within the time specified in paragraph (1) or (2), as the case may be, of a change in the details in relation to the pre-school service contained in the register pursuant to section 58C(2) of the Act or Regulation 7(2), the registered provider shall notify the Agency in writing of the change as soon as possible thereafter.*

#### Non-Compliance Information

(1)(3) The registered provider failed to notify the Early Years Inspectorate of a change in circumstances in relation to the following as per schedule 4 Form for Notification of Change in Circumstances:

The number of preschool children registered to attend the morning session at the preschool is 22. The service is registered to accommodate 21 preschool children at any given time.

#### Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

##### Corrective and Preventive Action

The person in charge of the service has engaged with the Services operating outside their registration department and has made a change in circumstances application to regularise the numbers of children attending the service.

##### Supporting documentation submitted

Correspondence between the service and registration/change in circumstances and Services operating outside their registration office in Tusla Early Years Inspectorate.

#### Summary Comment

The actions taken by the registered provider and person in charge of the service have been reviewed by the Early Years Inspectorate and deemed to address the noncompliance.

### 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.

#### Compliance Information

(1)(a) The registered provider had appointed a designated person in charge and a named person to deputise as required.

(b) The deputy person in charge was present and in charge when the inspector arrived unannounced at 09:00. The manager of the service arrived at 09:15 and remained on the premises for the remainder of the inspection.

(c) There was a clear management structure in place in the service.

(2)(a)(b)(d) Through discussion with the person in charge and review of staff files, it was confirmed that no new staff commenced employment in the service since the last inspection on 16.01.2024.

Regulation 9(2)(c) was reviewed in respect of the three adults employed and the registered provider.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for four adults, including the registered provider. However, the service did not adhere to the re-vetting time frames as outlined in the early years' inspectorate regulatory notice,

requiring services to renew garda vetting every three years for one adult. Please refer to the information outlined under regulation 23 of this report.

(4) The registered provider and all staff members held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education of at least level five on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) or a qualification deemed by the minister to be equivalent.

### 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 service.

(3) There were 17 children being cared for by 3 adults, with the person in charge also working directly with the children.

### 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-*

*(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 children brought their lunch from home and were encouraged to be independent in managing their own belongings. The children's drinks were available to them at all times throughout the inspection.

The staff sat with the children and engaged them in conversation in a relaxed manner at mealtime.

It was evident in conversation with staff that they knew the children and their families well, the service is integrated into the local community. The staff in the service work in partnership with parents, with the use of a child's profile informing the staff of children's needs and likes and dislikes.

The staff managed transitions between activities well, letting the children know what to expect.

The room had a large variety of play-based materials accessible to the children on low level shelving. Activities were observed to be child led with children being given the opportunity to take the lead, express their views, and choose games, songs and activities to participate in. There was a number of couches for the children to take a rest from activities.

### 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 inspector found by observation of practice, review of documentation, discussion with staff and inspection of the premises that the registered provider had taken the following steps to safeguard children attending:

##### General Safety:

The entrance door to the service was adequately secured to ensure the safety of the children within and to avoid unauthorised persons accessing the service or children exiting unsupervised.

##### Infection Control:

The staff cleaned the tables before and after eating.

Waste was managed appropriately with the use of pedal operated bins in the sanitary area

##### Administration of Medication:

In conversation with the staff, it was highlighted that no child receives regular medication or has a care plan this term. However, there was evidence of care plans for previous children who attended. The registered provider detailed the procedure if a child is unwell that staff contact parents/guardians who are usually nearby and collect the child. There was signed consent for administration of anti-pyretic medicine if required, but the staff stated they very rarely have to give medicine in the service.

Medicine was stored in its original packaging, in date and out of reach of children, as required.

##### Fire Safety:

The fire exits were observed to be unobstructed, and sign posted.

Fire evacuation procedures were displayed in conspicuous places.

##### Outing:

The person in charge stated the service doesn't take the children on outings.

### Non-Compliance Information

#### General Safety:

1. One adult's vetting disclosure was not dated within the previous three years contravening the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice 'EYI-RN12.3 Renewal of Garda Vetting'.

#### Infection Control:

- The handwashing practices observed were at variance with the infection control policy in place in the service. During session 1, children's hands were not washed before eating lunch. The early years inspector was unable to pull paper towel from the dispenser, which was out of reach of the smaller children. There was no step to make the paper towel dispenser accessible to the children. The liquid soap was out of reach of the children also, on a high shelf.
- Cleaning records were not maintained although cleaning of tables and sweeping of the floor was observed during the inspection. This non-compliance was present on the last inspection on 16.01.2024 and the previous inspection on 13 May 2021. The corrective and preventive actions stated by the registered provider failed to prevent recurrence of this non-compliance

### Action submitted by the Registered Provider

#### Corrective & Preventive Action

#### General Safety:

The person in charge reapplied for garda vetting renewal as required. To prevent the non-compliance from occurring in future the registered provider plans to apply in plenty of time before renewal due date in future.

#### Infection Control:

- The paper towels and soap are available within reach for the children to wash their hands.
- The person in charge has placed daily cleaning schedules on the wall for staff to fill in following cleaning every day. The team has discussed the habit of filling the cleaning schedules daily after cleaning.

#### Supporting documentation submitted

#### General Safety:

Evidence of garda vetting application submitted.

#### Infection Control:

- Evidence of purchase of new paper towel dispenser submitted.
- Evidence of cleaning schedules in use submitted.

### Summary Comment

The actions taken and evidence submitted have been reviewed by the Early Years Inspectorate and deemed to address the noncompliance. This regulation will be reviewed on the next inspection.

### 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)

Two adults with in-date First Aid Responder (FAR) training certificates were present throughout the inspection. Discussion with the registered provider highlighted that there is always someone with FAR training available to the children in the service.

(2)

(a) (b) A fully stocked first aid box was safely stored in a conspicuous location in the service.

### 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.*

*(2) The record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection by-*

*(c) an authorised person.*

*(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 detailing monthly fire drills that had taken place in the service. The last fire drill had taken place on 21 November 2025.

(b)

The number, type and maintenance record of firefighting equipment and smoke alarms on the premises was available. There was a record to show that the firefighting equipment had been serviced on 26.11.2025 and that maintenance of the smoke alarm system had taken place on 09.07.2025.

(2)(c) The records were made available for inspection.

(4)

There were Fire exit signs, fire action signs, and emergency evacuation procedures displayed prominently on the walls in the service.