

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015DS184
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Name of Service:	First Steps
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Address of Service:	Rowlagh Health Centre, Rowlagh, Clondalkin, Dublin 22, Co. Dublin
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Eircode:	D22 C9C3
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Name of Registered Provider:	Karen Finegan
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	20/01/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	29	PM	22
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	The Early Years Inspectorate, Tusla Child and Family Agency, Loughlinstown Health Centre, Loughlinstown Drive, Loughlinstown, County Dublin.
Inspection undertaken by:	O Quill, M Bermingham
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

First Steps is a community based non- profit organisation that is registered to provide full day, part-time and sessional care to children aged 2 to 6 years. The service is located in Rowlagh Health Centre, Clondalkin Southwest Dublin. The service is open Monday to Friday from 9.00am to 3.00pm. Care of the children is facilitated across five care rooms. An outdoor area is provided to the rear of the building.

Staffing

In total ten staff are employed in the service including the person in charge and two cooks.

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.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 15 Record of a pre-school child.

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 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.*

(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.

Compliance Information

(1)(a) The service had a designated person in charge and a named person who could deputise.

(b) At all times during the inspection the designated person in charge was present.

(2) Two new staff members were employed since the last inspection on the 16 November 2022. These files were reviewed and Garda vetting disclosures were inspected for all staff employed to work in the service.

(a) Three of the verified references provided were from a past employer.

(b) A second written validated reference was provided from a source other than a past employer for one staff member who did not have two previous employers.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures were available for all staff members employed in the service. Garda vetting disclosures had been renewed in accordance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, which requires services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) Police vetting was available for one staff member had lived outside Ireland for longer than six consecutive months as an adult.

(3) The procedures specified in paragraph (2) were carried out prior to staff being allowed access to children attending the pre-school service.

(4) Records were available evidencing the staff members who were employed to work directly with the children held the required qualification.

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.

(8) Without prejudice to paragraphs (2) to (7)-

(a) a registered provider of a pre-school service other than a child-minding service or a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that there are at least 2 adults on the premises at all times,

Compliance Information

(1) An adequate number of adults were working directly with the children at all times during the inspection.

(2) The minimum ratio of adults to children was adhered to at all times during the inspection. There were 29 children attending the preschool being supervised by 6 adults on the day of inspection.

(8)(a) There were at least two adults on the premises at all times. The staff roster provided for a minimum of two adults to be on the premises at all times of opening.

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.*

(3) A record in writing referred to in paragraph (1) or (2) shall be open to inspection on the premises by-

- (c) an authorised person.*

Compliance Information

(1) A sample of 10 records were reviewed for children who were attending the service. The records reviewed contained the following information:

- (a) The name and date of birth of each child.
- (b) The date on which the child first attended the service.
- (c) There was an area on the registration form where the date when a child would cease to attend the service will be recorded.
- (d) The names, addresses and telephone number of parents were recorded and information where parents can be contacted during the hours of operation of the service were also available.
- (e) There was authorisation for the collection of the child.
- (f) The records available supported the recording of any illness, disability, allergy or special need of the child.
- (g) The name and telephone number of each child's medical practitioner was recorded.

(h) A record of immunisations received was recorded.

(i) There was written consent for appropriate medical treatment of a child in the event of an emergency.

(3) The records relating to the pre-school children were available for inspection.

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

(1)(b) Appropriate and suitable care practice were evident throughout the service during the inspection.

A child-led approach was evident throughout the service. Children’s play, conversations, activities, artwork, and photographs in which children’s interests and sense of belonging were reflected. For example, In Susan’s room, the children were observed playing doctors surgery, which the adult described was in response to a person’s recent visit to the hospital. Play props included first aid materials and a doctor’s reception desk, while photographs and artwork included x-rays and body parts. In Natalies room, children participated in a welcome song and a group discussion about each child’s morning to include breakfast, arrival, interactions with family members, and children’s individual Christmas holidays. Children glued pictures of themselves during Santy’s visit to the service before Christmas. Photographs, labels and artwork about winter and frosty weather was visible throughout the service.

Staff displayed warmth and sensitivity during all interactions with the children and they were supported to participate in conversation, story-reading and songs. For example, in Natalie’s room, the adult used children’s names, read a story and sang songs together with the children speaking and singing most of the words. The children were encouraged to take-turns and children were individually supported and accommodated according to their need within these activities.

The atmosphere in the service appeared calm and relaxed. Transitions within the service were managed well and children appeared to be familiar with the daily routine. Adults supported children's independence to manage their personal care and eat their meals throughout the morning. The adults accompanied children to wash their hands, and sat with children during their meals, supporting the children to set up the meal and clean up afterwards. The person in charge described that if children feel hungry between mealtimes that something will always be provided and that children are accommodated to rest if needs be in the afternoon before going home.

There was a sense of community evident within the service. Children and adults from multiple rooms were observed joining together in a common area to participate in movement games, music and dance. The doors of individual rooms were open for part of the morning to facilitate interaction and movement between rooms. Links with the wider community were evident through photographs and labelling of places within, and information about, the local community.

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 entrance into the service was appropriately secured to prevent unauthorised access or a child exiting the service unsupervised.
- Cord blinds were secured.
- Cleaning agents and medication were stored out of reach of children.
- Fire exits were unobstructed and the kitchen was not accessible to children.

Infection Control:

- An infection control policy was in place to inform practice. The environment was clean. Staff maintained a cleaning record for their own care rooms. The person in charge confirmed a commercial cleaning company is employed to clean floors, windows and surfaces.
- Children were supervised washing their hands before eating.
- Pedal operated bins were in place throughout the service for the disposal of waste.

Fire Safety:

- The designated fire escape routes were clearly indicated and free from obstruction on the day of inspection. Staff members adequately outlined the evacuation procedures in place in the event of a fire and stated that fire drills are practiced regularly on a monthly basis.

Non-Compliance Information

Administration of Medication:

- There were no care plans available for four children who required medication for specific medical conditions.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

Administration of Medication:

- The manager developed individual health care plans for individual children in need of medical intervention while in our service. The parents completed the forms with the teachers and they are available in the child's classroom and will be reviewed regularly. As new children enter our service with a medical need the same form will be used with each child in partnership with families.

Supporting documentation submitted

Administration of Medication:

Copy of form.

Summary Comment

The registered provider submitted supporting evidence in keeping with the actions stated. The regulatory requirement has been met.

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) Staff trained in first aid for children were at all times immediately available to the children attending the pre-school service.

(2) (a), (b) A suitably equipped first aid box was safely stored in the service, easily accessible and available to the children attending the pre-school at all times.

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) A written record was available detailing fire drills that had taken place in the service. The record showed that the last fire drill had taken place on the 3 December 2025.
 - (b) There was a record to show that the firefighting equipment and the smoke alarm system had been serviced within the required timeframes.
- (4) The procedures to be followed in the event of a fire were displayed in a conspicuous location within the service.