

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015DY070
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Name of Service:	First Steps Creche and Montessori
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Address of Service:	Carleton Hall, 53A Shelmartin Avenue, Marino, Dublin 3, Co. Dublin
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Eircode:	D03 X684
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Name of Registered Provider:	Gillian Kojoy-Kendellen
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Service type:	Full Day
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Regulatory Compliance Meeting:	04/11/2024
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Date of Inspection:	09/09/2024
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No of pre-school children:	AM	27	PM	23
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Child and Family Agency, Second Floor, Unit 4 &5 Nexus Building Block 6A Blanchardstown Corporate Park, Dublin 15
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Inspection undertaken by:	Á Dunne, C Kerrigan
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Title:	Early Years Inspectors
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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).

Conditions if applicable	Not applicable.
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Description of service

First Steps crèche & Montessori is a private childcare service, located in a residential area in Marino north Dublin. The service is purpose built and is located on the ground floor of a community building. There are 3 care rooms in the service and a separate sleep room is located off the Toddler room. An enclosed outdoor space is located to the front of the building.

The service provides full day and part-time care and education to pre-school children from 6 months to 5 years. There are 3 care rooms in the service namely the Toddler room (1-2 years) the Preschool room (2-3 years) and the Montessori room (3-5 years). The service participates in the Early Childhood Care and Education scheme and operates from 8am-6pm Monday to Friday.

Staffing

On the day of inspection, there were eight adults present - The registered provider who provides support when required, five childcare staff, one staff member employed under the Access Inclusion Model (AIM) and a chef.

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.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations as follows:

Regulation 9 Management and recruitment (2)(a)(b)(c)(d), (4)

Regulation 11 Staffing Levels (1)(2)(8)(a)

Regulation 16 Record in Relation to Preschool Service (i) (j) (k)

Regulation 21 Equipment and Materials

Regulation 23 Safeguarding Health, Safety and Welfare of child

Regulation 25 First Aid

Regulation 26 Fire Safety

Regulation 28 Insurance

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under Regulation 16 Records in relation to Preschool Service and Regulation 23 Safeguarding Health, Safety and Welfare of child. The scope of the inspection included the three rooms of the service - Toddler room, Preschool room and Montessori 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 registered provider, 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

(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

(2) The files of eight adults were reviewed as part of the inspection, to include the registered provider who works in the service and seven staff.

(2)(a)(b) The registered provider had 2 written references and ensured that 14 written and validated references were available in relation to seven adults employed.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures were available for eight adults. The service also demonstrated compliance, with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) Police vetting was not required as no adult had lived outside of the state for a period of more than 6 months.

(4) Documentation was available to show that the six adults who worked directly with children attending the service held at least a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 or above on the National Framework of Qualifications or a qualification deemed eligible by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs

Non-Compliance Information

(4) Documentation was not available to demonstrate that one adult who worked directly with children attending the service held at least a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 or above on the National Framework of Qualifications or a qualification deemed eligible by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective Action

(4) Post inspection the staff member handed in their notice of employment as they felt they would not be able to further their education at the present time. During this notice period a new member of staff was hired. The new team member holds a recognised Fetac Level 6 qualification.

Preventive Action

(4) Going forward management will ensure to check all qualifications meet requirements on the National Framework of Qualifications or their eligibility by the Department of Children & Youth Affairs before offering an interviewee a position.

Supporting documentation submitted

(4) Copy of new staff members Qualifications and Garda Vetting.

Summary Comment

(4) Under Regulation 9, the non-compliance outlined above has been addressed.

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) The registered provider ensured that there were an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the service. During the inspection there were seven adults working directly with 27 children aged between 1 to 6 years in the morning and there were five adults working directly with 23 children aged between 1 to 6 years in the afternoon.

(2) The minimum ratio of adults to children was maintained during the inspection as the table below demonstrates.

Room Name	Age profile	On inspection AM	On inspection PM
Toddler room	1year to 2 years	2 adults with 8 Children	2 adults with 6 Children
Preschool room	2 years to 3 years	2 adults with 10 children	2 adults with 9 children
Montessori room	3 years to 5 years	2 adults with 9 children	1 adult with 8 children
Total	(1-6 years)	6 adults with 27 children	5 adults with 23 children

The registered provider was available in a supernumerary capacity and covered in rooms as required.

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:

- (h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis;
- (i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;
- (j) details of any medication administered to a pre-school child attending the service with signed parental consent;
- (k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.

Non-Compliance Information

- (h) The number of children present in the service was not recorded accurately, as follows –
- In the Toddler room between at 10.00am and 10.22am, only 7 children were present but 8 children were recorded in the electronic application as one child who left for an appointment was not marked as absent.
 - In the Preschool room between 8.16am and 10.19am, 10 children were present but 11 children were recorded in the electronic application.
- (i) The roster did not reflect the presence of the registered provider in the service.
- (j) On review of five medicine administration forms sampled, the following information was missing:
- The parent’s signature acknowledging administration of the medication was missing on three forms.
 - The date of the parents signature was missing on one form.

- The date of the staff members signature was missing on four forms
 - The name of the medication administered was missing on two forms
- (k) On review of ten accident and incident record forms sampled, the following information was missing:
- The parent's signature was missing on seven forms.
 - The date of the parent's signature was missing on three forms
 - The service managers signature was missing on six forms.
 - The date of the manager's signature was missing on four forms

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective Action

- (h) The registered provider had a meeting with the team post inspection the importance of accuracy when roll taking was spoken about. Particularly in relation to Fire & evacuation. The attendance roll must reflect the correct number of children on the premises at all times. After the meeting each staff member re-read the points of the policy and were given an opportunity to ask any questions. Once everyone was of agreement and they understood this policy it was signed and dated by each staff member.
- (i) The registered provider is now back on ratio in Pre-School room and this will be reflected on roster going forward.
- (j) Post inspection the service reverted back to using physical medicine administration books as the electronic application enables too many inaccuracies. The Service found a new Medicine Administration book and an Accident/Incident book in basement so started using these straight away. The service has also purchased a further two new books to have at hand if needed. Staff were all re-introduced to these books and as a team they all went through what was needed to be filled out in the best interest of the child's health and safety and also what would be needed to keep up with compliance.
- (k) The service has reverted back to physical Accident & Incident record form books as it will provide more accurate detail that was previously missing. Parents will be notified on the electronic application that an accident/incident occurred and they will be provided with a copy of the physical form at pick up time. After parent is satisfied with all information on it, it will be signed and dated by both parent and manager. Parents can then take their copy home with them and a copy will be left in the book for service files.

Preventive Action

- (h) The Manager will periodically check numbers in rooms on daily basis against roll on electronic application to ensure numbers are correct and there are no oversights with roll taking. Continue to train staff on 'Children's Roll policy' on a regular basis.

- (i) The deputy manager will run weekly roster by the registered provider to ensure they are added to it each day/week before posting to notice board.
- (j) Now with use of physical books the registered provider can more easily check that all dates and signatures are in place before the final sign off of forms. This will eliminate any missing information on forms going forward. Staff training on the correct procedure for filling out such forms will be addressed at each Team meeting going forward.
- (k) Now with use of physical books, the manager can more easily check that all dates and signatures are in place before the final sign off of forms. This will eliminate any missing information on forms going forward. Staff training on the correct procedure for filling out such forms will be addressed at each Team meeting going forward.

Supporting documentation submitted

- (h) Record sheet signed by staff after meeting in relation to roll taking and copy of Roll Policy
- (i) Copy of Staff Roster
- (j) Receipt for purchase of Medicine Administration Books and copy of a completed Medicine Administration record
- (k) Receipt for purchase of Accident / incident Books

Summary Comment

The non-compliances outlined above under Regulation 16, have been addressed.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 21 – Equipment and materials

A registered provider shall ensure that there is adequate and suitable furniture, play and work equipment and materials available on the premises of the pre-school service.

Compliance Information

- The rooms were bright and inviting play spaces to enable children to explore their environment.
- In the Preschool and Montessori rooms, a range of play materials and equipment were easily accessible and suitable to the age and stage of development of the children attending each room nurturing children's independence, ability to make decisions, enabling exploration and develop their play opportunities.

- The furniture provided in each care room was low level and suitable to the needs and age of the children. There were sufficient number of low tables and chairs to accommodate children whilst they played and ate in each care room.
- Cosy areas with couches, chairs, soft mats and rugs for rest and relaxation were present.
- The enclosed outdoor play area was available for the children which consisted of a soft artificial surface, artificial grass and concrete. The equipment and toys available included a sand tray and supporting equipment, slides, wooden playhouse and mud kitchen, trikes, scooters, ride in car, ride on car, seesaw, large building bricks and picnic tables providing learning opportunities for the children

Non-Compliance Information

1. In the Toddler room, the play materials and equipment were stored in boxes on a high shelf and not accessible to children, limiting child led play, decision making and independent free play.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective Action

1. The Toddler room staff re-arranged the children's play areas within the room and introduced more toys at a reachable level to the children. A large box of kitchen toys has been placed beside toy kitchen, in the construction area staff have brought down some large cars from the above shelves and also added a large box of building bricks. The baby doll section has had some pieces added and all areas have photos added to the boxes/areas for recognition by the child. Staff have also lowered family wall down for easier viewing for children.

Preventive Action

1. Going forward the staff will be more mindful in the toddler and all other rooms when planning room lay out. They will swap high and lower-level toys around weekly for continued stimulation of play for the children. They will ensure there is always an adequate number of toys on floor level for the children to enhance more child led pay, decision making and independent play of the child.

Supporting documentation submitted

1. Photographic Evidence

Summary Comment

Under Regulation 21, the non-compliance outlined above has been addressed.

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 kitchen area was inaccessible to the children throughout the inspection.
- Cleaning agents were stored out of reach of children.
- The ambient room temperatures of each care room were maintained between the recommended temperatures of 18°C and 22°C.

Infection Control:

- The service was maintained in a clean and hygienic condition throughout, with the premises and equipment observed to be visually clean.
- Nappy changing facilities were available for the children and nappy changing was completed for the children, at set times or when required in accordance with the service policy.
- Handwashing facilities for hand hygiene included liquid soap, and paper towels and thermostatically controlled warm water.
- Lidded pedal bins were provided for the disposal of waste in the care rooms and in the sanitary facilities.

Safe Sleep:

- The temperature of the room was documented and 10-minute sleep checks were completed on the children for colour, breathing, position while children slept.
- Shoes and outer clothing such as hooded tops were removed from children while they slept.

Non-Compliance Information

Infection Control:

1. In the Toddler room, one cot mattress and the blue couch were torn, leading to poor infection control as they could not be cleaned effectively.
2. In the Preschool/ Montessori room, sanitary facilities, the toilet paper was not stored in a holder and was observed to be sitting the back of the toilet, making it difficult for the children to access, leading to poor infection control.

Safe Sleep:

- In the Toddler room, nine children under two years of age were observed to be sleeping on low floor mats. Sleep assessments for these nine children were not available, this is at variance to the best practise sleep guidelines issued to the sector in September 2023.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

Infection Control:

Corrective action

- Post inspection, the torn toddler couch was removed from room & binned. There is an adequate rest area in toddler room with padded mats and cushions. A new mattress has been purchased so the torn cot mattress will be replaced when new one arrives.
- Post inspection, new toilet roll holders were purchased and attached to wall at child level, within easy access.

Preventive Action

- Going forward any item which is deemed unfit for purpose under the infection control regulation will be removed and or replaced with immediate effect. This will ensure all hygiene standards are being met.
- Sanitary facilities will be monitored daily to ensure each child has access to all items needed within the bathroom area. Any missing items such a toilet paper, soap or hand tissues will be replaced immediately and displayed at child friendly levels.

Safe Sleep:

Corrective Action

- Post inspection all children under the age of 2 years now sleep in a cot. The service will be closing their Toddler room next summer so have decided against the purchase of toddler beds. The service is quite small so they would not have an area to even store the toddler beds if purchased. The service have devised a plan for the nine cots the service already owns which can be used to allow each child under two have sleep time in a cot rather than on a mat. The youngest of our toddlers will have two small naps mid-morning & afternoon, whilst the older toddlers will have their sleep time after dinner at 12pm. This allows the service to 'share' some of the cots with separate bedding.
Post inspection, sleep assessments were filled out for every child who naps on a mat over the age of 2 years. The service did this in conjunction with each child's parents.

Preventive Action

- It is the intention of the service to start transition into a Montessori & afterschool service. This will mean the closure of the toddler room which in turn means the service will not have any under 2's which will be needing sleep. Until then, all under 2's will continue to sleep in a cot and will not be moved onto a mat until a full sleep assessment has been completed between service and parent. Going forward any child moved from a cot to a sleep mat will have a Sleep assessment record kept on file for them.

Supporting documentation submitted

Infection Control:

- Photographic Evidence and copy of receipt of purchase of new Mattress.
- Photographic Evidence

Safe Sleep:

- Photographic Evidence.

Summary Comment

Under Regulation 23, the non-compliances outlined above have been addressed.

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

- The service provided evidence that two adults trained in First Aid Response were available at all times to the children attending the pre-school.
- (a) and (b) A suitably equipped first aid box was available and was safely stored in an easily accessible and conspicuous position accessible by all three care rooms.

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 of the fire drills completed in the service. The last recorded fire drill took place on the 13 August 2024.

(b) A record was available of the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment demonstrating it was last serviced on the 25 August 2023 with a planned service for October 2024 and for the number, type and maintenance of the mains powered smoke alarms in the premises, which were last serviced on the 23 April 2024.

(4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire was conspicuously displayed on the premises

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

Evidence of insurance cover was available to demonstrate there was cover for the preschool children attending the service, with an expiry date of 27 March 2025.