

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015DY158
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Name of Service:	One Step Ahead
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Address of Service:	St. Benedicts & St. Marys N.S., Grange Park, Raheny, Dublin 5, Co. Dublin
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Name of Registered Provider:	Aimee Flynn
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Service type:	Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	12/09/2024
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No of pre-school children:	AM	28	PM	21
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Floor 7 Brunel Building, Heuston South Quarter, St John's Road West, Kilmainham, Dublin 8, D08 X01F
Inspection undertaken by:	E. Griffin and R. Duff
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

One Step Ahead is a community service in operation since 2013. The service is located on the site of a local primary school in North County Dublin. The service provides part-time and sessional care and education to children aged 2-6 years and participates in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme. The service operates from 8:40am-1:30pm Monday to Friday. There are two care rooms; ECCE 1 room which caters for children aged 2 ½ years to 3 ½ years and ECCE 2 room which caters for children aged 3 to 5 years of age. Both care rooms have adjacent sanitary accommodation and there is a small indoor play area and a large enclosed outdoor play area on the premises.

Staffing

The registered provider works in an administrative managerial role in the service and employs a total of ten staff members, two of whom are employed under the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM). On the day of Inspection, there were nine staff members present, the deputy person in charge and seven staff members working directly with children including two Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) staff members. The registered provider 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 following regulations were reviewed:

Regulation 9 (1)(2)(4)-Management and Recruitment.

Regulation 11(1)(2)(8)-Staffing Levels.

Regulation 15- Record of a Pre-School Child.

Regulation 19(1)(a)-Health, Welfare and Development of Child.

Regulation 23-Safeguarding the Health, Safety, and Welfare of child.

Regulation 26-Fire Safety Measures.

Regulation 28-Insurance.

As a result, the scope of the inspection included the two care rooms ECCE 1 and ECCE 2. A sampling process was used to assess compliance under: Regulation 15, Regulation 19 and Regulation 23.

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 deputy 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
- (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 service had a designated person in charge and a named person to deputise as needed.
- (b) The designated deputy person in charge was present when the inspectors arrived unannounced to the service.
- (c) The service had a clear management structure and staff were aware of their own role and responsibility.
- (2) A review of the roster and conversation with management showed that there are currently eleven staff employed to work in the service including the registered provider. The files of all staff employed were reviewed.
- (a) Fifteen written and verified references were available from recent past employers.
- (b) Three written and verified references were available from a reputable source other than a past employer.

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

(d) International Police vetting was not required as no staff member had lived outside of the state for six months or more as an adult.

(4) Evidence was available to show that the registered provider and ten staff members who worked directly with the children 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.

Non-Compliance Information

(2)(a)(b) The registered provider did not ensure that there were two written validated references available for all adults.

- Evidence was not available to show that one adult had a second written reference on file.
- Evidence was not available to show that two adults had one written reference validated.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective Action

(2)(a)(b) The registered provider has stated that a second written reference was obtained for staff member. The original had been misplaced. The two adults references were re-called and validated.

Preventive Action

(2)(a)(b) A robust system has been put in place. A new checklist for staff has been created and this must be checked by both manager and deputy manager. New staff will be unable to commence employment without all required documentation in place.

Supporting documentation submitted

- Documentary evidence of second written reference.
- Documentary evidence of two references validated.
- Documentary evidence of the new employee checklist.

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventive actions taken by the registered provider has addressed the non-compliances identified under Regulation 9.

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) The registered provider ensured that there were an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the service. On the morning of the inspection there were nine staff members working directly with 28 children aged from 2 ½ -4 years of age. During the afternoon of the inspection there were six staff members working directly with 21 children aged from 2 ½ -4 years of age.

(2) The correct adult/child ratio was maintained in the service throughout the inspection at all times. Evidenced by the following:

During the morning:

ECCE 1 room– There were 4 adults caring for 13 children aged between 2 ½ years to 3 ½ years.

ECCE 2 room – There were 5 adults caring for 15 children aged between 3 to 4 years.

During the afternoon:

ECCE 1 room– There were 3 adults caring for 11 children aged between 2 ½ years to 3 ½ years.

ECCE 2 room – There were 3 adults caring for 10 children aged between 3 to 4 years.

(8)(a) The registered provider ensured that two adults were always present on the premises at all times, evidenced by the staff roster presented on the day of inspection.

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 ten children’s registration records taken from the two care rooms were reviewed as part of the inspection. The registered provider ensured that the information required under (a)-(i) was maintained for each child.

(3)(c) Records were open to inspection by an authorised person. All records requested by the inspector were available for review.

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

(1)(a)

Basic Needs:

- Children brought snacks from home. The service provided an alternative snack in case a child did not eat their snack or forgot to bring it in. The service has a healthy eating policy which is shared with parents/guardians. Children's own drinks were available within their reach throughout the session.
- Identity and belonging were promoted in the service. For example, there was a 'Family Wall' display, a 'Birthday Wall' display and the children's artwork was displayed throughout both care rooms. In addition, each child had their own personalised coat hook and own cubicle to store outdoor gear.
- There were cosy areas with a soft seating, cushions and books for rest and relaxation present in the two care rooms.
- Children were observed to access the outdoor play area this supports their social, cognitive, gross and fine motor development.

Supporting Relationships:

- The service used an electronic application to communicate with parents and update them on their child's activities. The inspection team observed staff greeting parents at pick up times and chatting informally to parents about their child's day.
- Transitions were observed to be well managed; children were given five-minute verbal cue and visual cues aids were used to support children with the transitions. The children engaged well with tidying up, putting items away independently and waiting their turn to go outdoors to play.
- The children were observed to be partners in the programme of activities. In ECCE 2 staff were observed asking the children to choose what tabletop activity they would like to participate in. Children were observed to engage in artwork, Montessori activities and turn taking activities for example one staff and three children played an educational board game. When one child chose to play in the construction corner

for ten minutes instead of joining the tabletop activities, the staff respected his decision and ensured he was comfortable in the construction area.

- At snack time the children were observed to help set up the tables, this included giving out drinks and snacks with one child putting a vase of flowers on each table. This promoted independence and snack time was a sociable event with staff and children chatting amicably.

Physical and Material Environment:

- The care room in the service was designed with the age and stage of development having been taken into consideration. Children were observed to take part in free play and group work. The layout of the room facilitated these choices as the toys and equipment were laid out on low level shelving and were visible and accessible to the children to enable the children to explore and develop their play opportunities. For example, in each care room there was sensory equipment, home areas including kitchens with supporting equipment. Art equipment with materials were accessible with aprons in both rooms. In addition, there were Montessori materials available supporting the areas of practical life, sensorial, language, maths and culture available.
- There was evidence that equipment and materials were provided based on children's individual needs and emergent interests. In the ECCE 2 room, staff showed the early years inspector a theatre which was part of a large wooden structure, explaining that children's curiosity about dressing up led to staff creating a role play theatre area for exploration.
- There was a sufficient number of low tables and chairs to accommodate children whilst they played and ate in the care room.
- There was a small indoor sensory play area with a ball pit and sensory cause and effect-coloured mats.
- There was a large outdoor play area with an apple tree in the centre. Equipment and toys available included; two mud play kitchens with props, ride on toys, construction area, a swing, a slide, a sand box and a chalkboard with chalk available. In addition, there were two sheltered areas with benches for sitting and relaxation. Children were observed to use both areas during the inspection.

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:

- On the inspectors unannounced arrival at the service, access to the main door was monitored and controlled by staff to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the premises and to prevent children from exiting the service unsupervised.
- All cleaning agents and medication were stored safely and out of reach of children.
- All plug sockets accessible to children had socket protector covers.
- Documented attendance records demonstrated the children present in each care room.
- The outdoor play area was enclosed and secure which reduced the risk of unauthorised access or a child leaving the area unsupervised.

Infection Control:

- Windows were opened to allow fresh air to circulate in the care room.
- Each sanitary area was equipped with sinks at the children's level with liquid soap, warm water, and hand drying facilities. The children were facilitated to wash their hands before eating, after outdoor play and after using the toilet.
- Pedal bins were evident within the care rooms and sanitary area.
- The equipment, materials and surrounding environment appeared clean on the day of inspection.
- There was a fridge to store children's lunches.

Fire Safety:

- On the day of the inspection, it was observed that all emergency exit doors were clear from obstruction. This ensured the safe effective evacuation of children and staff in the event of an emergency evacuation.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. There was a broken toy plastic car seat in the outdoor area. This presented a risk of injury to children. It is acknowledged the deputy person in charge removed the broken car seat during inspection when the inspector brought the identified risk to their attention.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

General Safety:

Corrective Action

Broken seat was removed during the inspection.

Preventive Action

Equipment was already on risk assessment list; however staff have been instructed to be vigilant when assessing.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

- Documentary evidence of the Outdoor Safety Checklist.

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventive actions taken by the registered provider has addressed the non-compliance identified under Regulation 23.

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) Documentation was available to demonstrate that fire drills were practiced monthly. The last fire drill took place in June 2024. No fire drill took place in July and August as the service was closed for the summer.

(b) The number, type and maintenance record of the firefighting equipment was up to date. Fire extinguishers were last serviced on 1 March 2024. Smoke alarms were serviced on 8 July 2024.

(2)(c) Records were open to inspection by an authorised person. All records requested by the inspector were available for review.

(4) Procedures detailing the steps to take in the event of a fire were displayed throughout the service, in communal areas and care rooms.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The registered provider ensured the service was insured. The insurance certificate provided for review showed cover for the forty-two children the service is registered for and an expiry date of 23 June 2025.