

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015DY203
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Name of Service:	Stepping Stones Pre School
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Address of Service:	The Scouts Hall Newbrook Road, Donaghmede, Dublin 13, Co. Dublin
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Name of Registered Provider:	Rosaleen Cullen
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	14/11/2024
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No of pre-school children:	AM	12	PM	6
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate 2 nd Floor, Unit 4/5 The Nexus Building Blanchardstown Corporate Park Ballycoolin Dublin 15 D15 CF9K
Inspection undertaken by:	E Hosford
Title:	Early Years Inspector

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.

Description of service

Stepping Stones Pre School is a private childcare service which provides sessional education and care to children aged from 2 years 8 months to 5 years of age. The service operates two sessions from 8.45-11.45am and 12-3pm Monday to Friday and participates in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme.

The service is located in an urban area of Dublin city and operates from one care room in a multi-purpose building owned by Scouting Ireland. The service has access to an enclosed outdoor play area to the side of the premises.

Staffing

The service employs five members of staff to include, the registered provider and four childcare staff. There were four staff working directly with the children 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 area of governance/ health, welfare and development of child/ safety. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under:

- Regulation 9(2)(a)(b)(c)(d), (4) (6A) Management and Recruitment
- Regulation 11(1), (3), Staffing Levels
- Regulation 19(1)(a) Health, Welfare and Development of child
- Regulation 23 Safeguarding the Health, Safety and Welfare of the Child
- Regulation 25 First Aid and
- Regulation 26 Fire Safety Measures

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 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.

(6A) is inserted by S.I. No.632 of 2016 CHILD CARE ACT 1991 (EARLY YEARS SERVICES) (AMENDMENT)

REGULATIONS 2016 which states; Regulation 9 of the Child Care Act 1991 (Early

Years Services) Regulations (S.I. No. 221 of 2016) is amended - in paragraph (4), by the substitution of “paragraphs (5), (6) and (6A)” for “paragraphs (5) and (6)”, and (b) by the insertion of the following paragraph after paragraph (6): “)

(6A) Paragraph (4) shall not apply to an employee of a registered provider where - (a) the registered provider receives funding for the employment of the employee pursuant to a scheme funded by the Minister and known as the Access and Inclusion Model, and (b) the employment of the employee is for the purpose of providing support, pursuant to the scheme referred to in subparagraph (a), for a child attending the service to enable the child to participate in the programme known as the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) funding Programme.”

Compliance Information

(2) The staff files of five staff employed in the service were reviewed.

(a) One validated written reference was available for three staff members from a past employer.

- (b)
- Two validated written references from a source other than a past employer were available in respect of two staff members.
 - One validated written reference from a source other than a past employer was available in respect of three staff members.

(c) Garda Vetting disclosures were available for five 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 available from one country in respect of one staff member who had resided outside of the jurisdiction for more than 6 months as an adult.

(4) On review of documentation available five staff members working with the children had evidence to demonstrate that they held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 or above on the National Framework of Qualifications.

(6)(A) One staff member was employed under the scheme Access and Inclusion Model (AIM).

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) The registered provider ensured that there was an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the service.

(3) The correct adult/child ratio was maintained in the service throughout the inspection. There were 3 adults caring for 12 children aged from 2 years 8 months to 5 years in the morning session and 6 children in the afternoon session.

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:

- The inspector observed appropriate care practices in place during the inspection. The children moved freely – exploring their environment, playing and engaging with staff and each other. Staff used opportunities when assisting with dressing for outdoor play for warm individual engagement with the children.
- The children ate their snack from home in a calm and relaxed atmosphere. The food eaten consisted of sandwiches, crackers, fruits and drinks of water. Staff sat with the children and engaged in informal conversation.
- A rest area was available in the care room to enable the children to take time away from the group as desired.

Supporting Relationships around Children:

- Staff were observed using gentle tones whilst speaking to the children when giving them clear directions and guidance when transitioning from activities.
- Staff supported children to be independent in their environment including using the toilet independently, tidying up following activities, and packing their lunch boxes away.
- Staff engaged with parents and guardians daily at drop off and collection with additional time given to each family to discuss each child's day and activities if required.

Physical and Material Environment:

- The care room was bright and laid out with varying areas of interest to include home area, construction space, arts and crafts materials and tabletop games and puzzles. Materials available were accessible on open shelving which were clearly displayed. Tables and chairs were positioned beside the equipment to encourage the children to participate in tabletop activities.
- The enclosed outdoor play area consisted of an artificial grass and concrete paved surface. The children had access to activities and materials such as a planting wall with pots, seating area with picnic tables, activity wall (with funnels, bottles and tubes) building area with large blocks, balance area with beams and poles.

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 main door into the service was locked throughout the inspection and the external gate in the outdoor area was appropriately secured to reduce the risk of a child exiting the service unsupervised and the unauthorised entry of an adult.
- Cleaning materials were stored out of children's reach.

Infection Control:

- Children's perishable food from home was refrigerated on arrival to the service.
- Adequate hand washing facilities were available in the sanitary facility used by the children, these included thermostatically controlled hot water, liquid soap, paper towels and bins for disposal. Children were observed to wash their hands before snack.

Fire Safety:

- Records available demonstrated that fire drills take place in the service monthly in the morning and afternoon session.
- The designated fire exit was illuminated and clear of any obstructions throughout the inspection.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. The service attendance book was not completed on the children's arrival to the service. This could affect the safe evacuation of the premises in the event of an emergency.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. In response to the non-compliance the service has stated that a specific staff member now marks attendance each day as the children enter the premises. When this staff member is not available, the manager completes this task.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

1. Updated service policy.

Summary Comment

The service has addressed the non-compliance through the corrective and preventive action taken.

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) The registered provider ensured that a staff member was trained in First Aid Responder (FAR) certification with an expiry date of the 9 July 2026.

(2)

(a) and (b) A first aid box was available in the service and suitably equipped and accessible to the adults responsible for caring for the children attending 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.*
- (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 fire drills completed in the service. The last documented fire drill was the 5 November 2024 for the morning session and the 6 November 2024 for the afternoon session.
- (b) The number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms was present in the service. Fire extinguishers were serviced on 2 February 2024 and smoke alarms on 24 July 2024.
- (4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire was displayed in a conspicuous position in the service.