

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

**TUSLA Identifier:** TU2015GY246

**Name of Service:** Stepping Stones Child Development Centre

**Address of Service:** Garraun Park, Dublin Road, Tuam, Co. Galway

**Eircode:** H54 RK77

**Name of Registered Provider:** Eleanor Canny

**Service type:** Full Day

**Date of Inspection:** 05/06/2025

<b>No of pre-school children:</b>	AM	2	PM	2
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**Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:** Tusla – Child and Family Agency, Early Years Inspectorate, Quality and Regulations Directorate, Clinical & Administration Building, Block A - (1st Floor- Green Corridor), Merlin Park, Co. Galway.

**Inspection undertaken by:** S. Meehan.

**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

This purpose-built early years' service is based in the town of Tuam, county Galway and is under the patronage of the Brothers of Charity. The service operating hours are 8 am to 4 pm from Monday to Friday. The service caters for children aged between 3 and 6 years old. The service caters for full day-care and Early Childhood Care and Education scheme (ECCE) and sessional pre-school care programmes. The service provides an educational service to children with learning disabilities and children who are neurodiverse. The duration of a child's placement in Stepping Stones Child Development Centre is based on an assessment of their needs.

There were a variety of purposely designed rooms to support each child's development which included a gross motor room, sensory room, 2 playrooms, computer room, art room, multi-purpose room, storeroom, kitchen and a dining room. The pre-school children have access to secure outdoor play area to the rear of the premises for play activities.

### Staffing

There is a total of 5 adults employed in the service which includes the registered provider.

### 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 and health, welfare and development of child and safety. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

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

(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 was the person in charge or deputy manager who was available to deputise in their absence.

(b) The roster indicated that there was a designated person in charge during the inspection and indicated that a person was in charge while the service was carried out.

(c) The inspector observed that a clear management structure was in place in the service. The registered provider and deputy manager was available. All adults were aware of their roles and responsibilities.

All 5 adult recruitment files were reviewed which included the registered provider:

(2)

(a) Ten of the required 10 written and validated references were from past employers.

(b) None of the 10 written and validated references were from a source other than a past employer.

- (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all five adults. However, the service did not adhere to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years. Please refer to the information outlined under regulation 23 of this report.
- (d) International police vetting was available for 1 adult working in the service who had lived in another state for a period longer than 6 months.
- (4) Five adults working directly with the children held Early Childhood Care and Education qualifications ranging from a Level 5 and 8 on the National Framework of Qualifications 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.*
- (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) An adequate number of adults were working with the children on the day of inspection.
- (2) The registered provider ensured that the minimum ratio of adults to children was adhered to.  
There were 5 adults working directly with 2 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-

(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

19(1)(a)

##### BASIC NEEDS:

- The healthy eating policy was available for parents and guardians to view.
- The hot meal of the day was provided by the parents to cater for each child's individual dietary requirements.
- The snacks were supplied by the parents were healthy and nutritious and consisted of sandwiches, crackers, cheese, fresh fruit pieces, yogurts with milk or water available to children when needed. Perishable items were stored in the service fridge belonging to the children.
- Crockery and plates were offered and used during children's snack times and were appropriate for the age and stage of development of the children.
- Children had their nappy changed by adults as required throughout the day.
- The children self-care was encouraged by adults for e.g., to wash their hands prior to eating, after toileting, after using a tissue and after messy play.
- Children had the opportunity to rest or relax with soft seating in the form of child size couch in designated cosy area and the service also had a sensory room where children could take time out and relax.
- Children's behaviour was consistently managed in a positive manner by adults, with an emphasis on positive reinforcement and encouragement. Children are shown positive strategies to manage their behaviour during the day.
- There was an outdoor play area to the rear of the premises which was sufficiently spacious to accommodate the numbers of children attending the service.

#### Supporting Relationships Around Children

- A key worker system was in operation at the service to support each child's learning goals in a holistic way.

- Each child had an 'Individual Education Plan' (IEP) and personal outcome goals. Goals were drawn up based on their present abilities and this was done in co-operation with the family.
- The service works with a multi-disciplinary team to support each child.
- The programme areas covered for each child were cognitive skills, fine motor skills, gross motor skills, language and communication skills, social skills, play skills, interpersonal skills, personal skills and self-help skills. Other activities outside of the curriculum were offered.
- The service had also an emphasis on social outings and integration of each child into the local community.
- The adults were observed to show the pre-school children kindness, respect and positive regard and were observed to praise and encourage the children during their activities.
- Communication with parents was a core value of the service and regular communication and involvement with parents is encouraged. Documented and photographic evidence was available to support the involvement of parents.
- Children were observed at table top activities, free play, making 'Father's Day' cards, on a nature walk and in the sensory playroom.

### 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.*

#### Non-Compliance Information

##### General Safety:

- Garda vetting was available for 5 adults, however 1 of these vetting disclosure were not dated within the previous 3 years in adherence to the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice 'EYI-RN12.3 Renewal of Garda Vetting' posing a potential safety risk for children.

#### Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The registered provider responded to say:

#### Corrective & Preventive Action

## General Safety:

The service will ensure that all vetting procedures will be followed in future to ensure that every 3 years garda vetting is renewed.

## Supporting documentation submitted

### General Safety:

Evidence of the new garda vetting.

## Summary Comment

The Early Years Inspector has reviewed the documentation submitted and has deemed it has met the regulatory requirements of this part of the Regulations.

## 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) One adult working directly with the preschool children had first aid responder training (FAR) and was available to the children during the hours of operation of the preschool service. There were 3 adults with paediatric first aid certification.
- (2) (a) Suitably equipped first aid boxes were stored and were readily identifiable in the kitchen and in the service bus.
- (b) First aid supplies were available and in date and were available in the event of an emergency with the preschool children.

### 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 record in writing of fire drills indicated that the last fire drill was conducted on the 02 May 2025.
- (b) A record of the number, type and maintenance record of firefighting equipment was maintained. It was recorded that firefighting equipment was checked annually. Records confirmed that the firefighting equipment was serviced in October 2024 and the fire detection and smoke alarms were maintained annually, the last date of maintenance was on the 09 April 2025.
- (2)(c) The fire records required in paragraph (1) were available for review in the service.
- (4) The fire evacuation procedure for the service which contained details in relation to the procedure to be conducted in the event of a fire was available on file and displayed in the service.

### Part VI - Safety

#### Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

#### Compliance Information

The service had insurance with an expiry date 20<sup>th</sup> of October 2025, which was for a full day care service for 35 pre-school children and included the following: -

- public liability insurance,
- insurance against fire and theft,
- buildings insurance,
- insurance for outings undertaken as part of the service provision.