

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015KE139
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Name of Service:	First Steps
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Address of Service:	Naas G.A.A., Sallins Road, Old Town Demesne, Naas, Co. Kildare
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Eircode:	W91 P4VW
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Name of Registered Provider:	Criona Blackburne
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	13/01/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	19	PM	n/a
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Suite 7, Vista Primary Care, Ballymore Eustace Rd, Naas, Co Kildare.
Inspection undertaken by:	R. Brien
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	Click or tap here to enter text.
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Description of service

First Steps is a privately owned sessional service which provides care to children aged 2 to 6 years. The service is registered to operate from 09:00 to 12:00 and from 12:15 to 15:15, Monday to Friday. On the day of inspection, the service was operating the afternoon session from 12:30 to 15:30.

The service operates from a room on the first floor of the Naas GAA club in an urban area of Naas, Co Kildare. There is a fully enclosed outdoor play area with astro turf surfacing available on the grounds of the club.

Staffing

The service currently employs five staff including a manager. There were four staff working directly with the children on the day of inspection. The registered provider does not work directly in the service and 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 area of governance/ 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 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.

(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)(b)

The service had a designated person in charge and a named person to deputise as required who were both on the premises throughout the inspection.

(2)

The files of six adults were reviewed as part of the inspection including the registered provider and two adults who commenced working in the service since the last inspection on 8th February 2022. Documentation was reviewed in respect of these adults and met regulatory requirements as follows:

(a)(b)

Of the 12 validated, written references that were required, 9 were available from a past employer and 3 were available from a reputable source.

(c)

Garda vetting disclosures from the National Vetting Bureau of An Garda Síochána were available for six 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 required and was available for two staff members who had lived outside the State for a period exceeding six months as an adult.

(4)

Records were available evidencing that six staff members who were employed to work directly with the children held the required qualification or 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.

(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)

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

(3)

The minimum ratio of adults to children for sessional care services was adhered to at all times during the inspection. There were nineteen children attending being supervised by four adults on the day of 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-

(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

(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

The service had a healthy eating policy in place and staff reported that children bring their lunch in from home. The service operates a rolling lunch time. Children were given responsibility appropriate to their age and were observed taking their own lunches and drinks from bags and sitting at the lunch table with their peers to eat when hungry. Children were observed engaging in conversation with their peers during their meal and staff supported children who needed assistance with their lunch. Drinking water was accessible to children throughout the inspection and children had a drink with their meal. Lunchtime was observed to be relaxed and sociable.

Children were given responsibility appropriate to their age and were encouraged and supported to be independent. Inspectors observed children cleaning up after their play and lunch and using the toilet independently. Children were accompanied by a staff member to the toilets located on the ground floor and assisted as necessary. Staff provided an appropriate level of supervision whilst supporting the children's independence during play and lunch time.

Staff displayed warmth and sensitivity during all interactions with the children throughout the inspection. Staff demonstrated a good awareness of the needs of each child in their care and responded to children's cues promptly. Staff were observed to use distraction, gentle tones and praise when promoting positive behaviour in line with the service's behaviour policy. Transitions within the service were managed well and children appeared to be familiar with the daily routine. The atmosphere in the service appeared calm and relaxed.

Children's language development was supported through one to one and group discussions and songs which were observed during the inspection. Children's choices were respected with children given the opportunity to choose their own play equipment and activities during free play.

The staff described how they communicate with parents daily about their child at arrival and collection time and using an online application. Staff were observed to work well as a team, frequently communicating with each other in relation to the daily routine and children's needs.

The care room was bright and was arranged into defined areas of interest providing children with the freedom to play and explore. Designated areas of interest included arts and crafts materials, a home corner and shop for imaginary play, small world toys, construction toys, manipulative play and a rest area and library. The care room provided a range of developmentally appropriate play experiences for the children and was adequately resourced with a variety of materials. Family photos were displayed at the children's level and children's art work was displayed in the care room.

The environment was laid out to support the children's independence. Low level hooks were provided for coats and bags. Play materials were observed to be accessible to the children on low level shelving. Low level tables and chairs were available in the care room.

There was a fully enclosed outdoor play area with astro turf surfacing on the grounds of the GAA club which children use for outdoor play. A range of developmentally appropriate play equipment was available to the children in this area.

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 door to the service was adequately secured to ensure the safety of the children within and to avoid unauthorised persons accessing the service or children exiting unsupervised.
- Hand sanitisers and cleaning agents were stored safely out of reach of children.
- All storage facilities were inaccessible to children.
- The toys and play equipment observed in use by the children on the day of inspection appeared in good working order.

Infection Control:

- Liquid soap, warm water and paper towels were available to facilitate hand washing. Staff were observed to carry out hand washing as appropriate. The children were supported to wash their hands at regular intervals including after using the toilet.
- An infection control policy was in place to inform practice. The premises, equipment and materials appeared clean and maintained in good condition.
- Waste was managed appropriately with the use of pedal bins.

Fire Safety:

- All fire exits were clear of obstruction.

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)

A person trained in first aid was immediately available to the children at all times on the day of inspection.

(2)

(a) A first aid box was safely stored in an easily accessible and conspicuous location within the room.

(b) A first aid box was available to the adults and children in the service 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 monthly fire drills that had taken place in the service.

(b)

The number, type and maintenance record of firefighting equipment and smoke alarms on the premises was available. There was a record to show that the fire fighting equipment had been serviced on 05 July 2024 and that maintenance of the smoke alarm system had taken place on 30 July 2024.

(4)

The procedures to be followed during a fire drill and in the event of a fire were displayed in a conspicuous location within the service.