

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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| TUSLA Identifier: | TU2015KE153 | | |
| Name of Service: | Stepping Stones Montessori School | | |
| Address of Service: | Ballymany Road, Newbridge, Co. Kildare | | |
| Eircode: | W12 W310 | | |
| Name of Registered Provider: | Sharon O'Carroll | | |
| Service type: | Full Day, Part Time, Sessional | | |
| Date of Inspection: | 06/07/2023 | | |
| No of pre-school children: | AM | 24 | PM 20 |
| Address of the Early Years Inspectorate: | Early Years Inspectorate, Child and Family Agency, Suite 7, Vista Primary Care Centre Ballymore Eustace Road Naas, Co. Kildare W91 X38W | | |
| Inspection undertaken by: | T. Duignan | | |
| 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 | n/a | | |

Description of service

Stepping Stones Montessori provides full day-care, part-time care and sessional care to pre-school children aged 2 - 6 years of age. The service operates from 7:00am – 19:00 hours Monday to Friday. The Early Years' Service is located in a detached bungalow on the outskirts of Newbridge. There are two pre-school rooms in the main house and another preschool room located in a separate building to the rear of the premises. There is a sleep room available for children requiring sleep and a kitchen for food preparation. Two outdoor play areas are located at the front of the premises; an outdoor area and a covered area are at the rear of the premises. Set down and parking facilities are available outside the premises.

Staffing

There were eight adults present on the day of inspection, one of whom was the person in charge; six adults were working directly with the preschool children and school age children. The registered provider was present for the inspection. The person in charge provided additional support to care rooms as required. There was a cook and cleaner present also.

Five of the six adults working directly with the preschool children all held a recognised qualification in Early Childhood Care and Education on the national framework of qualifications.

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 safety. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under Regulation 15 - Record of a pre-school child.

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, person in charge, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

Part II - Registration and Register

Regulation 8 - Notification of change in circumstances

(1) A registered provider of a pre-school service other than a temporary pre-school service shall, subject to paragraph (3), notify the Agency in writing of any proposed change in the details in relation to the pre-school service contained in the register pursuant to section 58C(2) of the Act or Regulation 7(2) at least 60 days before it is proposed that the change would take effect.

Non-Compliance Information

- (1) The Registered Provider was operating outside of the registration for the service as evidenced by the following observation:
- There were two children aged 0-1 year and three children aged 1-2 years present in the service on the day of the inspection.
- The service is registered to accommodate children aged 2- 6 years.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The registered provider stated that:

Corrective and Preventive Action

- We will be applying for our registration age profile to be changed.

Supporting documentation submitted

No evidence submitted.

Summary Comment

The written response submitted has been assessed by the Early Years Inspectorate. A proposed change in circumstance to change the age profile of children to 6 months -6 years was submitted to the registration office and approved.

Regulatory compliance is met for regulation 8.

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) There was a designated person in charge and a named person to deputise as required.
 - (b) The named person in charge remained on the premises for the duration of the inspection.
 - (c) There was a clear management structure in place. A notice in the hall stated who the person in charge was. The staff were aware of who was in charge on a daily basis. The records for eleven adults were reviewed.
- (2)
- (a) Two written and verified past employer references were available in respect of four staff members and one written and verified past reference was available in respect of six staff members.

(b) Two written and verified reference from a reputable source other than a past employer was available in respect of one adult and one written and verified reference from a reputable source other than a past employer was available in respect of six adults.

(c) Garda Vetting disclosures were available for eleven adults.

(d) Police vetting was available for three adults who had resided outside the state for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months.

(4) Eight adults employed and working directly with children attending the service held at least a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 or higher on the National Framework of Qualifications.

Non-Compliance Information

(2)(d) Police vetting was not available for two adults who had resided outside the state for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months.

(4) One adult employed and working directly with children attending the service did not have at least a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 or higher on the national framework of qualifications.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The registered provider stated that:

Corrective and Preventive Action

(2)(d) The staff member involved is leaving our employment to work elsewhere. We will not hire a staff member in the future, unless they have police vetting in place and on file.

(4) The staff member involved is leaving our employment to work elsewhere. We will not hire a staff member in the future unless they have a certificate in Early Childhood and Education or a transcript of completed modules while awaiting certification.

Supporting documentation submitted

No documentation submitted.

Summary Comment

The written response and documentary evidence submitted has been assessed by the Early Years Inspectorate. Regulatory compliance is met for regulation 9. This area of practice will be assessed at the next inspection.

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) There were twenty-four children attending the service being supervised directly by six adults.

(8)(a) There were at least two adults on the premises at all times for the duration of the Inspection. This was confirmed following review of the staff roster for the service.

Non-Compliance Information

(2) The minimum ratio of adults to children was not adhered to during the day as evidenced by the following observations:

- At 10:25am, one adult was caring for ten children in the Playschool room. There were eight children aged 2-3 years and two children aged 3-6 years. Two adults were required to maintain the minimum adult child ratios.
- At 10:32am, one adult was caring for eleven children in Preschool room. There were nine children aged 3-6 years and two children who were school age. Two adults were required to maintain the minimum adult child ratios.
- At 11:08 am, one adult was caring for ten children aged 2 – 4 years in the Playschool room while the other adult was providing cover in another room for nappy changes. Two adults were required to maintain the minimum adult child ratios.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The registered provider stated that:

Corrective and Preventive Action

(2) The minimum adult: child ratio is being adhered too at all times. Each room has two staff members in order to maintain the correct adult: child ratio at all times. The manager is available to cover breaks and nappy changing and a part-time staff member not working during the summer has agreed to work relief hours - should staff need time off or call in sick. We have advertised a job for a new member to our team.

Supporting documentation submitted

No evidence submitted.

Summary Comment

The written response and documentary evidence submitted has been assessed by the Early Years Inspectorate. Regulatory compliance is met for regulation 11. This area of practice will be assessed at the next 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.*

(2) A registered provider of a pre-school service in a drop-in centre or of 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 particulars specified in subparagraphs (a), (d), (e) and (f) of paragraph (1).

(3) A record in writing referred to in paragraph (1) or (2) shall be open to inspection on the premises by-
(a) a parent or guardian of a pre-school child but only in respect of the record relating to that child,
(b) an employee who is authorised in that behalf by the registered provider, and
(c) an authorised person.

(4) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing referred to in paragraph (1) is retained for a period of 2 years from the date on which the child to whom it relates ceases to attend the service.

(5) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing referred to in paragraph (2) is retained for a period of 2 years from the date on which the child attends the service.

Compliance Information

A sample size of ten records was assessed.

(1) (a) – (i) Ten enrolment records were assessed, and all were found to be compliant.

(2) Not applicable as the service is not a drop in or temporary service.

(3)(a)(b)(c) The record in writing was open to inspection on the premises.

(4) The registered provider confirmed that the records were retained in storage for the required period.

(5) Not applicable as the service is not a drop in or temporary service.

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 secured by a yale lock and controlled by staff members to prevent children from exiting the service unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the pre-school room. Slide locks were in place on the fencing in the outdoor areas. The person in charge documented the inspectors' visit to the service in the visitor's book on arrival. The service met the necessary safety requirements in respect of the indoor environment, toys and equipment and safe storage of cleaning agents. The managers and staff members in the service completed daily indoor and outdoor risk assessments to promptly manage any risk identified. The service had a system in place to manage maintenance issues.

Infection Control:

There was an infection control policy in place. Thermostatically controlled hot water, liquid hand soap and paper towels were readily available for hygienic hand washing and drying. The staff members supervised children's handwashing and handwashing routines were well established. Nappy changing practices were consistent with the nappy change procedure for the service. Foot pedal operated bins were provided for the disposal of used tissues. Written cleaning schedules were maintained for the room environments which were observed to be maintained in a clean and hygienic condition.

Administration of Medication:

Medication was not given at the time of the inspection, written parental consent was available should medication be required to be administered to a child. The staff members were familiar with required safe practice when administering medication in the service. Medicine was safely stored.

Safe Sleep:

A sleep room with a total of three cots were in place for children less than 2 years of age and sleep mats were available for all children aged over 2 years requiring sleep. There was an adequate number of cots to provide needs led sleep for young children. The staff members were familiar with current safe sleep guidance and practice. It was observed that 10-minute sleep check observations were completed on all sleeping children and the staff documented the colour, position and breathing of sleeping children in their care. The environmental temperature

of the sleep room was maintained between 16^o-20^o Celsius. Comfortable rest areas were available for the children in the care rooms if they wished to take a break from activities and rest.

Fire Safety:

Monthly fire drills had been carried out and staff members were familiar with fire safety evacuation procedures from the service. The fire exits were not obstructed.

Outing:

The service does not conduct outings.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 24 - Checking in and out and record of attendance

- (1) A registered provider shall ensure that each pre-school child attending the service is checked in and out of the service by an employee or an unpaid worker.
- (2) Where there are more than 15 children attending a pre-school service in a drop-in centre, the registered provider shall ensure that one employee or unpaid worker is assigned responsibility for the checking in and out of children.
- (3) A registered provider shall ensure that-
 - (a) no person other than-
 - (i) pre-school child attending the service,
 - (ii) a person dropping or collecting such a child,
 - (iii) an employee, or
 - (iv) an unpaid worker, can enter the premises without his or her entry being approved by an employee, and
 - (b) a daily record in writing is kept of the entry on the premises of any such person.
- (4) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing referred to in paragraph (3)(b) is retained for a period of one year from the date to which it relates.

Compliance Information

- (1) The registered provider ensured that each child was checked in and out of the service. This was confirmed by the written attendance records maintained in each care room.
- (2) Not applicable.
- (3) (a), (b) The registered provider ensured that any person entering the service was approved and a record in writing was maintained.
- (4) The registered provider confirmed that the records were retained in storage for the required period.

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) Persons were trained in in First Aid Response (FAR) for children and were immediately available to the children attending the service.
- (2)
- (a) The first aid equipment was safely stored, in a conspicuous position in the main corridor and each room had a small first aid kit.
 - (b) Suitably equipped first aid boxes for children were available to 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 firefighting 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 recorded fire drill was 8 June 2023.
 - (b) A maintenance record was kept of the firefighting and smoke alarm system in the premises. The firefighting equipment was serviced on November 22 and the smoke alarm system was serviced 26 April 2023.
- (4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire was conspicuously 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

There was evidence of current insurance cover valid until 27 March 2023. The insurance provided cover for 45 children.