

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

<b>TUSLA Identifier:</b>	TU2015KY047
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<b>Name of Service:</b>	First Steps
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<b>Address of Service:</b>	Glounsharoon, Castleisland, Co Kerry
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<b>Eircode:</b>	V92 KD42
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<b>Name of Registered Provider:</b>	Maura Cronin
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<b>Service type:</b>	Sessional
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<b>Date of Inspection:</b>	15/05/2025
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<b>No of pre-school children:</b>	AM	16	PM	N/A
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<b>Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:</b>	Tusla Early Years Inspectorate Office, Estuary House, Henry St. Limerick
<b>Inspection undertaken by:</b>	M Riordan, M Creagh
<b>Title:</b>	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).

<b>Conditions if applicable</b>	N/A
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### Description of service

First Steps is a private sessional childcare service operating since 2002, catering for children aged 2 to 6 years. Open from 9.15 am to 12.30 pm, Monday to Friday, for 38 weeks a year, it is based in a rural area in Glounsharoon, near Castleisland in County Kerry. The facility, located on the grounds of the provider's home, includes a large preschool room, sanitary facilities, nappy changing areas, and an enclosed outdoor play area.

### Staffing

The registered provider is the owner and the manager of the service. There are 2 additional staff employed to work at the facility. All adults have the required qualifications in Early Childhood Care and Education.

### 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, premises and facilities. 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 inspectors wish 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*

*(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,*
- (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 designated person in charge of operating the service and was present on the day of the inspection. There was a named person available to deputise if needed.

(b) During the period of the inspection, the registered provider was present, and the staff roster indicated that this person was available on the premises each day.

(2) Written and validated references were available for the registered provider and two staff members.

(a) Of the six references required, six were from past employers and were validated.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures received from the National Vetting Bureau of An Garda Síochána were available for the registered provider and the staff. However, for 1 adult 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) Police vetting was not required for any staff working at the service.

(4) The registered provider along with both staff employed at the service held an appropriate qualification in Early Childhood Care and Education.

### 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 an adequate number of adults were working directly with the children at the service.

(3) On the day of the inspection there were 16 preschool children present with 3 adults. The adult child ratio was above the requirement of Regulation 11.

### Part IV – Information and Records

#### Regulation 16 – Record in relation to pre-school service

*(1) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of the following information in relation to the service:*

- (a) the name, position, qualifications and experience of the person in charge and of every other employee, unpaid worker and contractor;*
- (b) details of the class of service and the age profile of children for which the service is registered to provide services;*
- (c) details of the adult:child ratios in the service;*
- (d) the type of care or programme provided in the service;*
- (e) the facilities available;*
- (f) the opening hours and fees;*
- (g) the policies, procedures and statements the service is required to maintain in accordance with Regulation 10;*
- (h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis;*
- (i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;*
- (j) details of any medication administered to a pre-school child attending the service with signed parental consent;*
- (k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.*

#### Compliance Information

- (1) The registered provider displayed the following information about the service in the main entrance for the parents to view or in the records available in the service.
- (a) The name, position, qualifications and experience of the person in charge and each staff working at the facility.
  - (b) Details of the class of service and the age profile of children for which the service is registered to provide service to.
  - (c) Details of the adult/child ratios in the service.
  - (d) The type of care or programme provided in the service was outlined in the parent handbook.
  - (e) The facilities available.
  - (f) The opening hours and fees.

- (g) A record in writing was maintained of policies and procedures required in accordance with Regulation 10. A summary of the policies were shared with parents at time of enrolment.
- (h) Details of attendance by each pre-school child daily was recorded.
- (j) The service had a medication administration record template available that could be used in the event of a child requiring medication to be administered at the service.
- (k) Details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service was recorded.

### 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

##### **BASIC NEEDS:**

Children arrive each morning between 9.15am and 9.30am. Upon arrival, they place their photograph in the inbox using a clock in wall chart. At 11.00am, there is a scheduled snack break, however, children who are hungry earlier are permitted to sit and eat as needed. The service promotes healthy eating, and the snacks provided by parents for lunches were observed to be nutritious. Examples included a variety of sandwiches, crackers, bite-sized pieces of fruit, and yogurt. Perishable foods provided by parents were stored in zip-lock bags and refrigerated until required at break time. Throughout the morning, children were observed accessing their individual water bottles in an accessible location within the care room, and drinks were taken outside when the children moved outdoors. As the weather was warm on the day of the inspection, children were reminded to take fluids more frequently. Children had easy access to the sanitary area from the care room and were observed accessing the toilet area independently, with staff providing assistance when required. Opportunities for quiet rest were available in the designated rest area, which was furnished with soft foam couches, cushions, and comfortable floor mats. The children were able to move seamlessly between the indoor and outdoor environments, with the door to the outside left open throughout the morning.

### PHYSICAL AND MATERIAL ENVIRONMENT:

The care room featured clearly defined interest areas that supported children's development across various domains. Accessible low-level shelving allowed children to choose materials freely, promoting independence. The centre of the room had low tables and chairs used for tabletop activities and dining. Open-ended play materials, such as building blocks and egg boxes, were within reach. Montessori materials encouraged learning and challenge. Sensorial play with rice, sand, and water was available indoors and outdoors. Children's artwork and educational posters decorated the walls at their eye level.

Adjacent to the preschool room was a large, well-secured outdoor play area with high steel fencing and a gated entrance. It featured quality ride-on toys, swings, slides, and tuff trays with water for outdoor sensorial play. A large sandpit accommodated group play, and a sheltered space allowed for all-weather activities. An outdoor sink enabled hand washing. The area had both concrete and grass surfaces, and children could access it from the care room. Developmentally appropriate equipment included sensory materials and gross motor skill-promoting toys like swings, bikes, and balance bicycles. Children engaged in imaginative play with farm toys.

### 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:

All external doors were secured to prevent children from leaving unsupervised. Windows were risk assessed and made safe to avoid falls or exits, being blocked by large pieces of furniture. Toys and play equipment were appropriate for the age group, in good condition, and free from hazards. Storage facilities were inaccessible to children, and waste was stored properly both indoors and outdoors. The outdoor area had a high fence and secure gates to prevent unsupervised access and unauthorised entry.

#### Non-Compliance Information

##### General Safety:

Garda vetting was available for all staff members. However, for 1 staff member the vetting disclosures was not dated within the previous three years in adherence to with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice 'EYI-RN12.3 Renewal of Garda Vetting'.

## Action submitted by the Registered Provider

### Corrective & Preventive Action

#### General Safety:

Renewal of Garda vetting for one staff member was completed. An alert system has been activated to highlight expiry dates of Garda vetting disclosures for all staff working at the service.

### Supporting documentation submitted

#### General Safety:

Evidence of the new Garda vetting disclosure for the required staff member was forwarded to the Office of the Early Years Inspectorate.

### Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions, and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified has been adequately addressed.

## Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

### Regulation 29 - Premises

*A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-*

- (a) of sound and stable structure,*
- (b) safe and secure,*
- (c) kept adequately lit, heated and ventilated*
- (d) cleaned, maintained and repaired, as required, and*
- (e) equipped with adequate and suitable sanitary facilities.*

### Compliance Information

- (a) The building appeared to be of sound and stable structure both internally and externally and no obvious defects were noted on inspection.
- (b) The premises appeared safe and secured. The outdoor area was well secured with steel fencing and gates surrounding the perimeters, thus preventing any unauthorised access to or exit from this area of the service.
- (c) All areas were well lit by natural light and by artificial light when needed. There was no evidence of mould, stale smells, or stuffiness.
- (d) The areas outside were all well maintained and routine cleaning schedules were in place for all internal and external areas. A high standard of operational hygiene was noted throughout.

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(e) There were an adequate number of toilets available in the service for both the number of children and adults at the service.