

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

<b>TUSLA Identifier:</b>	TU2015KY047		
<b>Name of Service:</b>	First Steps		
<b>Address of Service:</b>	Glounsharoon, Castleisland, Co. Kerry		
<b>Eircode:</b>	V92 KD42		
<b>Name of Registered Provider:</b>	Maura Cronin		
<b>Service type:</b>	Sessional		
<b>Date of Inspection:</b>	22/11/2023		
<b>No of pre-school children:</b>	AM	7	PM N/A
<b>Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:</b>	13 Market Square, Mallow, Cork. P51 DD5Y		
<b>Inspection undertaken by:</b>	E. Friel		
<b>Title:</b>	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).

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

First Steps is a private sessional service in operation since 2002. It is registered to accommodate children aged from 2 years to 6 years of age, currently children attending are aged from 2 years 6 months to 6 years of age. The service operating hours are from 9.15 am to 12.30 pm which includes the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE Scheme), Monday to Friday, 38 weeks of the year.

First Steps is located in Glounsharoon outside Castleisland in County Kerry. It operates from a single storey, purpose built, childcare premises which is located on the grounds of the registered provider's home. The service consists of a large care room off which there are two children's toilets and a kitchen. The adult toilet is located in the entrance hallway and this room has a children's nappy changing facility. There are two doors in the service: one is used as an entrance door and the other door leads directly to the secure outdoor play area. A car parking area is available to the front of the service.

### Staffing

There are three staff members who work directly with the children including the registered provider and one AIM Support Worker.

### 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 registered provider, deputy, 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 designated person in charge and a named person was available to deputise.
- (b) Both the designated person and the named person were available during the opening hours of the service.
- (c) The management structure was displayed in the hallway of the service and staff roles and responsibilities were displayed for each staff member.

(2) Recruitment records in relation to the three adults were reviewed:

- (b) There were four validated references from past employers and two validated references from sources other than past employers.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures from the National Vetting Bureau were available for the three adults in the service.
- (d) Recruitment records indicated that no international police vetting was required as none of the three adults had lived outside of Ireland for six consecutive month or longer as adults.

(4) Documentary evidence was available to confirm that the three adults working directly with the children had attained major awards in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 or above on the National Framework of Qualifications.

### 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 were an adequate number of adults working directly with the children while they were present on the premises.

(3) The adult/child ratios were met. There were seven children in attendance with three adults from 9.15 am until 12.15 pm.

### 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.*

(3) A record in writing referred to in paragraph (1) or (2) shall be open to inspection on the premises by-  
(c) an authorised person.

### Compliance Information

(1) The pre-school records of the fifteen children registered to attend the sessional service were reviewed, all were found to contain the relevant particulars (a) to (i) above.

(3)

(c) The pre-school records were open to review by the inspector on the morning of the 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

### Compliance Information

#### BASIC NEEDS:

- The service promoted healthy eating and snacks provided by parents/guardians were observed to be nutritious. Examples included a variety of sandwiches, crackers, bite sized pieces of fruit and yogurt.
- Children were observed, throughout the morning, accessing their individual water bottles from their bags which were located within the care room. Examples included a child coming in from the outdoors to get a drink of water and then returning to play when finished drinking.
- Children had easy access to the sanitary area from the care room and were observed accessing the toilet area independently. Staff provided assistance where required and were nearby to provide reminders such as drying hands thoroughly.
- Opportunities for children to sit quietly were provided in the rest area which was furnished with soft foam mats on the floor, a vinyl two-seater sofa and a small wooden bench. There were two cloud lights fixed to the wall in the area and books were available from tiered shelving to read while sitting quietly.
- The day of inspection was damp and drizzling with rain, the children were dressed appropriately in their coats, hats and boots for outdoor play. Waterproofs were available for each child, if required.

- The children were able to move easily in both the indoor and outdoor environments with provision made for storing the children's belongings on hooks with each child's name and photograph.

### **SUPPORTING CHILDREN'S RELATIONSHIPS:**

- Opportunities were available for the children to be actively involved in exploring issues of cultural, social and individual diversity with one child observed returning a book to the staff member which the child stated had been read by the parent the evening before describing the process of the shoe box appeal. The book was then passed onto the next child to take home and share with their parents/guardians.
- Staff were observed listening, observing and responding to the children's individual needs. One staff member provided a range of equipment designed to provide opportunities for children to practice their balancing and co-ordination skills which included the use of a balance board and a piece of rope that the children were encouraged and supported to stand on and follow the snake pattern.
- Children engaged in activities in the care room and in the outdoor play area were encouraged and supported by staff in turn taking and sharing of equipment and toys.
- Teamwork in the service was evident with staff heard discussing the best ways, and resources needed, to meet the needs of the children.
- Staff stated that they use a number of methods to exchange information with the parent's/guardians including verbally at drop off and collection and through a messaging application with the children's activities and photographs being sent regularly.
- Staff meetings with management were stated as taking place regularly with topics such as planning, and the children's needs being discussed.

### **PHYSICAL AND MATERIAL ENVIRONMENT:**

- Clearly defined areas in the care room provided playful opportunities for the children to enhance their learning needs across all developmental area. Science experiments were visible in the room including the walking water experiment with photographs documenting previous experiments including a volcano eruption and the pencils through the water bag experiment.
- Materials and resources were located on accessible shelving positioned at the children's level offering freedom of choice and promoting independence. Examples included puzzles, playdough and rollers, blocks, cars and fine skill activities with tweezers and pom poms.

- The walls were decorated with seasonal artwork including winter scenes, alphabet pictures/letters and photographs of the children on their individual friendship garden flowers. Informational help posters promoting bizzzy breaks such as huffing and puffing, wiggling and twiddling and reaching and releasing activities were also visible on the walls.
- Children could access the secure outdoor play area from the care room. The surface of the area was half concrete and half grass. The children had access to a range of developmentally appropriate equipment including sensory materials such as sand in a covered box with moulds, spade and vehicles. Opportunities were available for the children to practice their gross motor skills on the swings, ride-ons, tractors and balance bicycles and the children were observed playing games such as Mr Wolf exploring the concept of time.

### **PROGRAMME OF ACTIVITIES:**

- Formal and informal observations of the children, detailing their interests and needs, were available for the inspector to view which were used to inform the planning of the curriculum and the activities for each child.
- Children's language development was supported through one to one and group conversations, songs including Ring a Ring a Rosie and storytelling from a book on Tractors, Trucks and Diggers read by a staff member.
- On the day of inspection, children were facilitated to make their own choice of selecting play equipment and activities they wished to engage in. With staff seeking additional equipment in storage, which was not already out in the room, such as the tunnel for crawling through and the rope for tug of war which were both requested by a child.

### 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 internal care room door was secured with a sliding bolt and the external door was fitted with a key lock to prevent unauthorised adults entering the service and children leaving the service unsupervised.
- The emergency fire exit door was unobstructed.
- All toys and play equipment in the care room appeared in good condition.
- Heavy shelving and storage were secured to the walls.
- Phone flexes and cords were secured out of reach of the children.
- Indoor waste was stored in pedal operated bins.
- The kitchen was locked, and the key was hung out of reach of the children, preventing the children accessing unsafe areas and kitchen equipment.
- The outdoor play area was secured with high metal fencing, concrete wall a high metal gate ensuring the children could not access dangerous areas or that unauthorised adults could not gain entry.
- The outdoor play area was secured with metal fencing, a concrete wall and a high metal gate that was bolted.

##### Infection Control:

- Children and adults washing their hands in the wash hand basins had access to thermostatically controlled hot water, dispensing soap, paper towels and pedal operated bins for the disposal of waste.
- Tissues were available to the children who were observed accessing and disposing of them in the pedal operated bin nearby.
- The nappy changing area was observed to have a mat which could be easily cleaned, single disposable gloves and aprons and a sealed, pedal operated bin for the disposal of nappies. Children's spare clothes were available nearby and were stored in individually labelled bags in a lidded box.
- Staff were observed disinfecting the tables and sweeping the floors maintaining a safe, hygienic environment.

##### Administration of Medication:

- Anti-febrile medication was stored in its original container.

### Fire Safety:

- Fire extinguishers were secured to the walls, within easy reach of staff in an emergency.
- The fire assembly point was visible on the perimeter fencing of the outdoor play area.

### Non-Compliance Information

#### General Safety:

- (1) Two windows in the care room were not fitted with restrictors posing a safety hazard.

#### Infection Control:

- (2) Three children's perishable foods including ham, yogurt and cheese were not stored in the refrigerator. The food was observed to be stored in the children's bags in the care room where the temperature was recorded at 19°C, posing a risk of the food spoiling. This non-compliance was also observed on the previous inspection on 2 November 2021 in which the registered provider stated, in the corrective and preventive actions, that all perishable foods would be stored in the refrigerator, this was not found in practice on the day of inspection.

### Action submitted by the Registered Provider

#### Corrective & Preventive Action

The following statements were received from the registered provider:

#### General Safety:

- (1) A window fitter has agreed to fit the two catches in January 2024.

#### Infection Control:

- (2) A reminder sent to parents to ensure perishable foods are in a zip lock bag which will be stored in the fridge. Staff are aware of the importance of storing perishable food in the fridge.

#### Supporting documentation submitted

#### General Safety:

- (1) The statement from the registered provider has been accepted.

#### Infection Control:

- (2) The statement from the registered provider has been accepted.

### Summary Comment

The non-compliances under Regulation 23 have been addressed.

## 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.*

### Compliance Information

(1) The attendance record book was available and detailed each child's arrival and departure.

(2) On the day of inspection, the attendance records had been completed for each child by the registered provider.

(3)

(a) The registered provider ensured that no other person other than those identified in (i) to (iv) gained entry to the service.

(b) A record in writing was kept of the visitors to the service in the visitor book in which the inspector signed into which was available in the service.

### 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) Certificates were on file to verify that the three staff members had First Aid Responder training completed. The three staff members were available at all times during the morning of inspection.

(2)

(a) (b) The well stocked first aid box, which was easily accessible to the staff, was stored in the care room and was available 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 firefighting 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 written record was available of the monthly fire drills that took place in the service. The last fire drill was recorded as taking place on 23 October 2023.
  - (b) Written records were available detailing the number, type and maintenance of firefighting equipment and the smoke alarms in the service. The firefighting equipment certificate was dated November 2023 and the smoke alarm certificate was dated 30 August 2023.
- (2)
- (c) The above records were open to review on inspection.
- (4) The notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire were posted on the notice board in the hallway of the service.

### Part VI - Safety

### Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

#### Compliance Information

A written record was available of the service's insurance policy with the expiry date recorded as 27 March 2024. The service was insured for 22 sessional children. Information included details such as including public liability, personal accidents and employer's liability.