

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015LD016
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Name of Service:	StepByStep
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Address of Service:	Bundoon, Killoe, Co. Longford
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Eircode:	N39 HH02
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Name of Registered Provider:	Mary Corr
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	10/03/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	33	PM	28
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, SAP Office, St Loman's Campus, Springfield, Mullingar, Co Westmeath, N91 N4XC.
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	Not applicable.
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Description of service

StepByStep provides full day care, part-time and sessional care to children aged 0 – 6 years in the rural townland of Killoe, Co. Longford. It is open from 8:00 am – 18:00 hours Monday to Friday.

The service is located in a bungalow and has four care rooms, a kitchen and laundry area. The outdoor areas are located at the rear and sides of the service and include a forest area; all weather sheltered areas and an outdoor cabin.

The service is registered to provide school age care.

Staffing

The service employs eleven adults. On the day of the inspection there were ten adults present including the registered provider, the person in charge, the cook and seven adults who worked directly with the children in the three care rooms.

All adults working directly with the children had a major award 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.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under.

- Regulation 9 (2)(a)(b)(c)(d), (4) - Management and recruitment.
- Regulation 11(1), (2), (8)(a) – Staffing Levels.
- Regulation 23 – Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child.
- Regulation 24 - Checking in and out and record of attendance.
- Regulation 25 (1), (2)(a)(b) – First aid.
- Regulation 26 – Fire Safety.
- Regulation 27 – Supervision.
- Regulation 28 – Insurance.

These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

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 III – Management and Staff

Regulation 9 – Management and recruitment

(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

Following a review of previous inspection information, information available on inspection and discussion with the person in charge it was determined that two new staff members had been employed since the previous inspection. The two staff members work directly with the children. The files of the two staff members and garda vetting disclosures for six staff members were reviewed.

- (2)
- (a) Two written and verified past employer references were available in respect of two adults employed whose staff files were reviewed.
- (b) Not applicable, as the references were from past employers.
- (c) Garda Vetting disclosures were available for all adults working in the service. 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.
- (4) Two adults employed to work directly with children attending the service and held at least a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 or higher or a recognised equivalent qualification on the National Framework of Qualifications.

Non-Compliance Information

(2)(d) Police vetting was not available for one adult who had resided outside the state for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months whose records were reviewed.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(2)(d) The staff member was engaged on a once off emergency cover basis to maintain ratios and is no longer working in the service. We have reviewed recruitment practices.

Supporting documentation submitted

Not required.

Summary Comment

The written response submitted by the registered provider had been reviewed by the Early Years Inspectorate. Regulatory compliance is met for regulation 9(2)(d).

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 thirty-three children attending the service being supervised directly by seven adults.

(2) The minimum ratio of adults to children was adhered to during the day.

(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.

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 and managed by the staff to ensure the safety of the children within the service. The service met the necessary safety requirements in respect of the indoor environment, toys and equipment and safe storage of cleaning agents. Staff members in each care room advised the inspector they would remove any beaded necklace if observed that a child may be wearing them.

The staff members were aware of the potential choking risks that grapes posed when asked by the inspectors.

There was documentary evidence available that daily indoor and outdoor risk assessments were completed daily and reviewed by the registered provider to promptly identify and manage any potential risks in the care rooms. The service had a system in place to manage maintenance issues.

Infection Control:

Thermostatically controlled hot water, liquid hand soap and paper towels were readily available for hygienic hand washing and drying. The staff members were familiar with the importance of handwashing practice as a means to control the spread of infection in the service. They supervised children's handwashing and handwashing routines were well established. Foot pedal operated bins were provided for the disposal and containment 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. The staff members were familiar with the required practice when administering medication in the service. Medicine was safely stored.

Safe Sleep:

There was one sleep room with six cots available for children less than 2 years of age; nine low level sleep beds were available for all children aged over 2 years requiring sleep. There was an adequate number of cots and low-level beds available to provide needs led sleep for young children. The staff members were familiar with current safe sleep guidance and the required care of sleeping children including sleep room environmental temperatures and the 10-minute sleep check observations for all sleeping children which was recorded in the electronic sleep log.

Comfortable rest areas were available for the children in each care room 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. Fire assembly signage was observed at the front of the service.

Outing:

The service conducted outings and an outings policy was in place.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

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

Infection Control:

2. Nappy changes were observed on the day of inspection. On all occasions, the adult did not remove their apron following the bagging up of the soiled nappy and removal of used gloves. Soiled nappies used aprons and used disposable gloves need to be disposed of at the same time following removal of the old nappy.

Administration of Medication:

3. There was no documentary evidence that the health care plans for children requiring medication to be administered for a health condition had been regularly reviewed and updated.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. The Garda vetting renewal documents are now on file. There is a tracking system on the service App. Reminders will be sent to staff to complete Garda Vetting links within the required timeframe going forward.

Infection Control:

2. Nappy changing procedures have been reviewed with all staff. Ongoing supervision and regular checks will be carried out to ensure practice is consistently maintained.

Administration of Medication:

3. Where any child has a diagnosis of allergies, etc an up-to-date health care plan will be in place and regularly reviewed to ensure compliance. Parents will be reminded to ensure the service is updated with relevant information as required.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

1. Garda vetting documents for two adults.

Infection Control:

2. Document

Administration of Medication:

3. Document.

Summary Comment

The written response and documentary evidence submitted by the registered provider had been reviewed by the Early Years Inspectorate. Regulatory compliance is met for Regulation 23.

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 the care rooms.
- (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. The manager ensured that the two inspectors' entry to the service was recorded in the visitor log.
- (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

- (2)
- (a) The first aid equipment was safely stored, in a conspicuous position in the care rooms.
 - (b) A suitably equipped first aid box for children was available at all times to the adults caring for the children attending the service.

Non-Compliance Information

- (1) A staff member present trained in in first aid response (FAR) and immediately available to the children attending the service was not present on the day of the inspection. It is acknowledged that staff members trained in paediatric first aid were working on the day of the inspection.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

- (1) Another fulltime member of staff has since completed FAR training to ensure cover in place at all times in case a staff member has to be absent due to unforeseen circumstances. A fulltime staff member has completed FAR in full on Thursday 02/04/26.

Supporting documentation submitted

- (1) FAR certificate of completion.

Summary Comment

The written response and documentary evidence submitted by the registered provider had been reviewed by the Early Years Inspectorate. Regulatory compliance is met for Regulation 25(1).

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 took place on 19 February 2026.
 - (b) A record was kept of the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises. The firefighting equipment was serviced on 26 September 2025, and the smoke alarm were last serviced on 13 June 2025.
 - (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 27 – Supervision

A registered provider shall ensure that pre-school children attending the service are supervised at all times.

Compliance Information

Children were observed being supervised during the inspection by the staff caring for them in the care rooms sanitary areas, while using the stairs and the outdoor area.

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 for 54 children attending the service. The expiry date was noted to be 27 March 2026.