

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015LD016		
Name of Service:	Step By Step		
Address of Service:	Bundoon, Killoe, Co. Longford		
Eircode:	N39 HH02		
Name of Registered Provider:	Mary Corr		
Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional		
Date of Inspection:	07/11/2024		
No of pre-school children:	AM	35	PM 25
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Year's Inspectorate, TUSLA, Child and Family Agency, Government Buildings, Convent Road, Roscommon, Co. Roscommon.		
Inspection undertaken by:	A Kennedy & K Folan		
Title:	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).

Conditions if applicable

Not applicable

Description of service

This full day care service is located in the rural townland of Bundoon, near the town of Longford. The service operates a full day care service from 8.00hrs to 18.00hrs. A sessional service is also available to children availing of the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme. The service caters for children aged between 0 to 6 years. The service is registered for a maximum number of 54 pre-school children, at any one time. On the day of inspection, there were three playrooms in use, namely 'the Daisy room' and 'the Sunflower room' on the ground floor and 'the Sweetpea room' on the first floor. There is an art room on the ground floor. There is a designated kitchen where the main meals are prepared, cooked, and stored on site. There are outdoor play areas to the rear and side of the premises. There is a forest area, all-weather sheltered areas, and an outdoor cabin. The service is also registered for a school aged service.

Staffing

The registered provider works in the service daily. Fourteen staff including the registered provider work in the service. Three staff are employed to work directly with the school aged children. Ten staff hold a Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) at a Level 5 to 8, in Early Childhood Care and Education. The staff have documentary evidence of ongoing training and education. There is a designated chef employed to prepare, cook and serve the service main meals.

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 inspectors wish 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

(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*

(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 there was a named person available to deputise in the service.

(b) The deputy person in charge was on the premises when the early years inspectors arrived. The registered provider and person in charge subsequently arrived and remained on site for the duration of the inspection. Documentary evidence indicated that either the designated person in charge or deputy were available, on the premises, when the pre-school service was operating.

(2) The fourteen staff files were reviewed.

(2)(a) & (b) Twenty-eight of the twenty-eight validated written references on file in respect of the fourteen staff, were from a past employer or a source other than a past employer.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures were available in respect of the fourteen staff. Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all fourteen staff. 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.

(d) Documentary evidence indicated that two of the staff had lived outside the jurisdiction, for longer than 6 consecutive months, while over the age of 18 years, and had the required police vetting.

(4) Ten staff working directly with the children had evidence of Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) Level 5 to Level 8, 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.

(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.

Compliance Information

(1) At all times during the period of the inspection, the registered provider ensured that an adequate number of staff were working directly with the children.

(2) On the morning of the inspection, there were 35 children present. All children were aged between 1 to 5 years of age. There were seven staff directly caring for these children. Additionally, the registered provider and the person in charge acted as childcare relief and assisted with the administration elements of the inspection. In the afternoon, there were 25 children present. All children were aged between 1 to 5 years. There were four staff directly caring for and supervising these children. Additionally, the registered provider and the person in charge acted as childcare relief and assisted with the administration elements 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

(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

- Each child was given enough time to eat and enjoy their snack(s) and meal(s) without being rushed. The atmosphere during mealtimes was relaxed, with pleasant social interaction among the children and staff.
- The service promoted healthy eating, and the meals and snacks were provided at regular intervals during the day. Young children had the opportunity to feed themselves appropriate to the age and stage of

development. Children's drinks were available in individually labelled containers within their reach throughout the session, should they feel thirsty at any stage. Mealtimes were observed to be happy, social occasions with staff and children engaged in social conversation

- Nappy changing was carried out regularly and promptly when required and was handled in a positive and sensitive manner. Staff members were observed using this time for warm one to one interaction with the children.
- The individual sleep needs of younger children were met, and this was observed on the day by children sleeping at various intervals when the children demonstrated sleep cues. Older pre-school children were facilitated with a scheduled rest period in the afternoon. Both younger and older children were observed to sleep in a designated sleep room which contained cots for the children aged under 2 years and stackable beds for the older preschool children.
- Children in the Daisy room were observed to be free to, creep, crawl, pull themselves up and learn to walk in a safe space.
- The service used an interactive social media application 'app' showing children's activities, events, themes, and learning. The 'app' collated the service calendar, policies, procedures, fire drills, risk assessments, cleaning schedules, daily indoor and outdoor assessments, attendance records, pre-school records, medication administration and any potential accident and incidents. The 'app' also collated a profile for each child with photographs of the child engaged in the activity and staff observations. Staff advised the inspectors that drop off and pick up times are used as a further opportunity to communicate with parents.
- The staff listened to children in a caring, gentle way when they expressed emotions, and reassured them that it is normal to experience positive and negative emotions at times. The staff acknowledged and accepted children's feelings (positive and negative) and the relationships between children's actions and other's responses.
- The staff were observed helping children to find solutions, supporting them, and talking to the children in a variety of ways, discussing, questioning, modelling, and commentating, extending a child's learning and initiating games and activities. The staff provided significant opportunities for the child to decide their play activities and experiences.
- Staff used positive strategies to support children's inclusion. The inspectors noted that the staff acknowledged a child's engagement in an activity 'that is great' 'well done' and used open ended

questions such as ‘what should we do next?’, ‘is there any other way to do this?’, to allow children to critically think and explore.

- The staff supported children to enter social groups, and to learn to help and positively engage with other children. They encouraged and praised children for specific, positive, and appropriate behaviours. Children were given positive alternatives, rather than just being told ‘no’. Children were supported in preventing, managing, and resolving conflict. Children could identify, name, and explore their feelings both positive and negative.
- An adult’s armchair was provided in the Baby room to allow adults working with the children to sit and feed, cradle, or comfort the children.
- In the Daisy room children were observed to be happily engaged in a variety of materials. Interest areas were sufficiently resourced offering an adequate range of toys and materials on low level shelving that were freely and readily accessible to children.
- The Daisy room included a role play kitchen, which included pots, pans, play food which encouraged imaginary play, conversation, and interactive play. Children’s artwork was displayed on the walls.
- The children in the Sunflower and Sweetpea rooms were observed at free play, painting, stacking, playing house, playing with transport vehicles, construction, dressing dolls, and at tabletop activities.
- Wooden boards were placed on the wall to support fine motor development.
- Songs and rhymes were played throughout the morning in the Daisy room which gave opportunity for dance and movement as well as encouraging speech and language development.
- On the day of the inspection the service received a visit from a music company with the children in the Sunflower and Sweet pea rooms taking an active part in this activity.
- On the day of inspection, in the outdoor areas, the children were observed at water play, making soup, collecting leaves, at sand play, and exploring in the forest.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 22 – Food and drink

A registered provider shall ensure that adequate and suitable, nutritious and varied food and drink is available for each pre-school child attending the pre-school service.

Compliance Information

- The service has a healthy eating policy in place. A weekly menu is displayed in the hallway of the service.
- The service provides breakfast and a hot meal with parent's supplying 2 snacks.
- From 8:00hrs to 9:30hrs, the service provided breakfast for any child who was hungry.
- At 10.30hrs and 15.30hrs, the children had their snack of fruit pieces, yogurt, crackers, sandwiches, and bread sticks, provided by parents and guardians.
- The children attending the full day care service had a hot meal provided by the service.
- On the day of inspection, at 12.45hrs, the main meal was bacon, mashed potato, beans and gravy.
- The registered provider advised that the staff ensured that each meal / snack had two food groups.
- The registered provider advised that there was a supply of food in the kitchen, for any child requiring additional food.
- A drinks table was available in each playroom to allow the children the opportunity to 'self-serve' their drinks.
- Perishable items from children's lunch boxes were stored in designated fridges.
- Allergen lists are displayed in the kitchen and the care rooms.
- The meals served were of an appropriate texture for children, with substitutes made to some meals for young children for example on the day's spaghetti is on the menu, mashed potato is available for the younger children if preferred.

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 main door to the service was secured upon the inspector's arrival at the service.
- The kitchen and storage areas were secure and inaccessible by the children.
- Fire doors throughout the premises were unobstructed.
- Cleaning agents were stored on high shelving and inaccessible to children.
- The temperature in the preschool rooms was thermostatically controlled to ensure the temperature was maintained to 18-22°C.
- The temperature in the sleep room was within the recommended range of 16-20°C and measured 18.4°C of the day of inspection.
- Visibility stickers were placed on glass doors as a safety precaution. Windows accessible to children were fitted with safety restrictors.
- There were no pits or ponds in the outdoor area to cause any risk of risk to the pre-school child.
- The registered provider clearly identified to the early year's inspectors, the drop off and collection procedures for children.
- Heavy equipment and furnishings were anchored appropriately.

Infection Control:

- Hand washing facilities were provided with a supply of warm water, liquid hand soap and disposable paper hand towels.
- The children were assisted and encouraged to wash their hands before eating, after nappy changing, after using a tissue and after playing outdoors.
- The toys and play equipment were maintained in a clean and hygienic condition. In the daisy room, objects placed in the child's mouth were placed in a labelled, lidded box for sterilisation.
- A refrigerator was provided in the kitchen and in the playrooms, for the storage of perishable foods.
- The playrooms were ventilated by means of openable windows and mechanical ventilation. whilst maintaining the room temperatures at the required levels

- The registered provider had a cleaning schedule template and cleaning records for the materials, equipment, and furnishings. These records held on the software application.

Administration of Medication:

- No medicine was administered on the day of the inspection. However, staff detailed the procedures to be followed in the event of a child requiring medication. Records of previously administered medication were kept and available on the day of inspection.
- Medicines were securely stored in the kitchen, in the refrigerator.

Safe Sleep:

- There is a designated sleep room in the service which contains 6 cots for children under the age of 2 years and 4 stackable beds for older children.
- The temperature in the sleep room was monitored and recorded by staff and was observed to be 18.4°C on the day of the inspection which is within the required temperature range for sleep.
- Cots were spaced adequately apart to allow for staff to move between and carry out sleep checks.
- There was a safe sleep policy that detailed temperature, lighting, ventilation, space between cots and child safety requirements as per the 'safe sleep for under 2's best practice guidelines for childcare services policy'.
- Records indicated the time a staff member physically checks a sleeping child, and the sleeping child's colour, position, breathing and the temperature of the sleep room with the opportunity to document any necessary remedial actions taken.
- A pod thermometer was available in the sleep room and used as the method of recording the sleep room temperature and therefore taking remedial action when temperatures were above 20 °C and below 16 °C.
- Each child had a designated linen.
- In each of the playrooms, the children had the opportunity to rest or relax with soft seating in the form of child size couches, matting and cushions in designated cosy areas.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

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

Fire Safety:

- It was noted from the assessment of the fire records that the fire drills are not carried out on a monthly basis with four fire drills recorded in 2024 and the most recent fire drill recorded on the 8th of October 2024 . It is recommended that fire drills are carried out on a monthly basis to ensure the children are familiar with the procedure in event of an emergency.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

The designated person in charge submitted a written response on 7th of January to the office of the early years inspectorate to advise

General Safety:

- This person has moved employment since inspection. If this staff member is employed in the future, the garda vetting disclosure will be renewed.

The staff files will be checked by management to ensure all information is available and within date.

Fire Safety:

- Fire drills are now carried out monthly and a record is maintained of same on the software application.

The staff have been reminded of the requirement to carry out monthly fire drills at the staff meetings.

Supporting documentation submitted

Fire Safety:

- Photographic evidence was submitted of the recording of monthly fire drills carried out on 21st of November and 17th of December 2024.

Summary Comment

The actions taken and evidence submitted by the service has been reviewed by the Inspectorate and deemed to have addressed the regulatory non-compliances found under Regulation 23.

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) Three suitably equipped first aid bags were available and in an easily accessible conspicuous position.

(b) The first aid bags were readily available, with content items within date. First aid boxes were easily accessible by staff and adequately stocked for the number of children on the premises.

Non-Compliance Information

(1) On the day of the inspection, there was no evidence provided to ensure a person trained in first aid for children was available to the children at all times.

Subsequent to the inspection on 13th of November, the manager submitted evidence of one person's certificate of paediatric first aid training. This certification does not meet the requirements of the regulation.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The designated person in charge submitted a written response on 7th of January 2025 to the office of the early year's inspectorate to advise:

A senior fulltime staff member is booked for First Aid Response Training over 3 full days.

The First Aid response training is due to be completed on 21st, 28th of January and 4th February 2025.

Supporting documentation submitted

Documentary evidence of the deposit paid on 18th of November 2024 for the First Aid response training to commence on 21st, 28th of January and 4th February 2025.

Summary Comment

The action taken and evidence submitted by the service has been reviewed by the Inspectorate and deemed to have addressed the regulatory non-compliance found under Regulation 25.

The designated person in charge has committed to submitting the FAR certificate to the office of the early year's inspectorate upon completion.

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) Arrangements were in place to record fire drills. The last documented fire drill, was dated 8th October 2024
- (b) A record of the number, type, and maintenance of firefighting equipment in the service was on file. Records indicated that the last annual maintenance for the firefighting equipment was dated 11th of September 2024 and the wired smoke alarms were positioned throughout the building and were serviced on 19th of February 2024.
- (4) The fire evacuation procedures were displayed in prominent positions within each care room and throughout the building.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The registered provider ensured the service was adequately insured for 54 children at any one time up to 27/03/25.

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 service was maintained in an appropriate and adequate state of repair.
- (b) The entrance into the service and the outdoor play areas were adequately secured to prevent a child exiting and an unauthorised person entering the premises.
- (c) The playrooms were adequately lit, ventilated, and heated.
- (d) The premises was maintained in a clean and hygienic condition.
- (e) The sanitary facilities were adequate for the needs and requirements of the children attending the service.