

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

<b>TUSLA Identifier:</b>	TU2015LH059			
<b>Name of Service:</b>	Little Steps Creche & Pre-School			
<b>Address of Service:</b>	34 Oulster Lane, Drogheda, Co. Drogheda			
<b>Eircode:</b>	A92 NP6F			
<b>Name of Registered Provider:</b>	Aoife Lennon Ne Roden			
<b>Service type:</b>	Full Day			
<b>Date of Inspection:</b>	21/11/2023			
<b>No of pre-school children:</b>	AM	10	PM	10
<b>Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:</b>	180-189 Lakeshore Drive, Airside Business Park, Swords, Co Dublin K67 Y5C6			
<b>Inspection undertaken by:</b>	AM Coyle			
<b>Title:</b>	Early Years Inspector			
<b>Authority to Inspect</b>				
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>	Not Applicable			

### Description of service

Little steps creche and Preschool was established in 2014 and taken over by the current registered provider in February 2023. The service provides full time, part time and sessional preschool care and education to children from 2 to 6 years, participating in the in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme from 9am to 12 Midday and from 12:30pm to 4pm Monday to Friday. The service is located in a converted domestic dwelling and has 2 care rooms in operation. The Wobbler room is located on the ground floor and the ECCE room is located on the first floor. A separate sleep room is located on the ground floor and an enclosed outdoor area is located to the rear of the service.

### Staffing

The service employs 5 staff members including 2 staff member who are employed in the service to reduce the adult to child ratio and if necessary to work with a child with additional needs, a post which is funded by the minister as part of the Access and Inclusion Model scheme. The registered provider works directly with the children attending the service and a staff member is employed in a joint administration/ catering assistant role.

### 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/ safety/ premises and facilities. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9,11, 15,16,19,23 25,26 and 29;  
These findings are outlined within the relevant regulation within this report.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 15 – Record of 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, 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,*
- (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 of the service and there was a named person available to deputise as required.

(b) The registered provider was present and in charge of the service when the inspector arrived unannounced on the morning of the inspection.

A total of 5 staff files were reviewed including the file for the staff member who was employed in a combined office administration and catering role in the service.

(2)(a) &(b) Eight written and appropriately validated references were available.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures were available for the registered provider and 4 staff members whose files were reviewed.

(4) Documentary evidence was available to confirm that 4 staff members whose files were reviewed and who work directly with children in the service held an appropriate childcare qualification at Level 5 or higher on the National Framework of Qualifications or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

### Non-Compliance Information

(2)(a) &(b) Two validated written references were not available for 1 staff member.

(d) International police vetting was not available for 1 staff member who had lived outside the Irish state as an adult for more than 6 consecutive months.

### Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

#### Corrective Action

(2)(a) & (b) Registered Provider submitted two validated written references for this staff member.

(d) Registered Provider now has the international police vetting for the member of staff who lived abroad for over 6 months.

#### Preventive Action

When new staff arrive, registered provider will add CVs and references to their files.

#### Supporting documentation submitted

Two validated written references.

International police vetting

### Summary Comment

The evidence submitted by the registered provider in relation to regulation 9 – Management and recruitment has been reviewed and accepted.

### 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) During the period of inspection there was an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the pre-school children.
- (2) The adult to child ratios were correct in the service when the inspectors arrived unannounced and remained so throughout the inspection.
- The following adult to child ratios were observed during the inspection:
- In the Wobbler Room there were 4 children aged between 2 years and 3 years 4 months being cared for by 2 staff members.
  - In the ECCE Room there were 6 children aged 3 years 2 months to 4 years 5 months being cared for by 1 staff member.
- (8) (a) The registered provider ensured that 2 adults were present in the service at all times.

### 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) A sampling process was used in relation to the children's records. All 7 sampled registration forms were appropriately completed with the required information as specified in sub-sections (a) to (i) in this regulation.

(3)(c) The children's records were open to inspection as requested by the inspectors

## 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;
- (h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis;
- (k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.

### Compliance Information

(1)(h) Details of children's daily attendance including arrival and departure times were recorded in the service.

(k) The service had a record in writing of accidents, injuries and incidents involving pre-school children. The records sampled and found to be clear and legible, and included parental signatures to document that they had been informed and were aware of the relevant incidents on the day they occurred.

### Non-Compliance Information

(1)(a) A record was not maintained in the service of the name, position, qualifications, and experience of 4 employees in the service.

### Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

#### Corrective Action

(1)(a) registered provider now has staff profiles up to date. She has attached all CVs requested.

## **Preventive Action**

All CVs are now in their staff files.

## **Supporting documentation submitted**

Curriculum Vitae received for 4 staff members.

## **Summary Comment**

The evidence submitted by the registered provider in relation to regulation 16 – Record in relation to pre-school service has been reviewed and accepted.

## 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**

(1)(a) The following observations are examples of how each child's learning, development and well-being was facilitated within the service:

### **Basic needs:**

- There was a warm and welcoming atmosphere in the 2 care rooms in the service. The staff members were observed to be caring, kind and attentive in their interactions with the children.
- The children bring their own morning snack with them from home and the remaining meals and snacks are provided by the service including a hot meal which is served at 12 midday and sourced from a specialist catering company. The staff members interacted warmly with the children during mealtimes which created a relaxed atmosphere and encouraged the children to enjoy their meals.
- The children's nappies were changed promptly as required. Staff members were observed chatting to the children throughout the process and using the time as an opportunity for one-to-one interactions with the children. The children who were toilet trained were encouraged to be independent in using the toilet with support provided as required.

- The personal care needs of the children were attended to promptly by the staff members with the children facilitated to wash their hands before they ate. The children were supported in putting their coats on independently before they went outside.
- Rest areas including mats and cushions were provided in both care rooms should the children chose to take a break throughout the day. A separate sleep room with 2 stackable beds was provided, none of the children present on the day of inspection needed to sleep.
- The staff members approached children's behaviour in a positive and supportive manner, calmly distracting or re-directing the children before conflict escalated.

### Supporting relationships:

- In each of the care rooms the staff members were observed to interact with children in a sensitive and warm manner. Staff demonstrated their familiarity with the children by talking with the inspector about their observations of the children, interests, personalities and developmental stages. The children were observed to be very comfortable in their environment and sought out staff members for support and reassurance as they required it.
- Parents and children were observed being warmly welcomed on arrival to the service and the staff members spent time conversing and sharing information in a welcoming and friendly way.
- The staff members were friendly and relaxed with each other and the care procedures and planned activities were smoothly implemented.
- A written record was maintained and shared with parent documenting the children's dietary intake, activities, nappy changes and sleep in the service.

### Physical and material environment:

- The play materials and resources were available on low level shelving in the care rooms allowing children access to resources. The children in both care rooms demonstrated familiarity with their environment to access the toys and play resources they chose to play with.
- The ECCE room was a warm and inviting space with the children's artwork decorating the walls and paper lanterns and lights hanging from the ceiling. A well-resourced home area was available with a range of accessorial toys including cooking utensils, dolls, and dolls clothing and care items which enabled the children to extend their play.

A variety of transport toys were positioned on a mat for the children to play with, a dolls house with play materials was located on a low-level windowsill, tabletop materials, small world toys, jigsaws and art resources were provided on low level shelving. A resourced home corner was provided in the Wobbler room along with transport toys, tabletop resources and jigsaws.

- A range of books was available in both care rooms to support the children’s language development.
- The outdoor play area was located to the rear of the Wobbler room. The area was surfaced with safety tiles and ride on toys were provided for the children to play with. All of the children present on the day of inspection spent time in the outdoor area on the day of inspection.

### Non-Compliance Information

#### Physical and material environment:

1. There were no sensory play opportunities available for the children in the Wobbler room. The materials available were largely plastic which insufficiently stimulated the senses and curtailed the children’s learning and developmental experiences.
2. With the exception of the home area in the Wobbler room there were no further areas of interest provided to support the pre-school children in initiating and sustaining play activities
3. The family wall that was on display in the Wobbler room was positioned at too high a level for the children to view this does not enable the children to develop a sense of belonging and connectedness in the service and to maintain links with family and home.

### Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

#### Corrective Action

#### Physical and material environment:

1. Registered provider has added natural elements like rice, pasta, water, sand, and more wooden sensory materials to replace some of the plastic ones were there before.
2. Now there are four areas of interest: cozy corner, home, small world, and construction.
3. Service now has the family photos at a lower level where the children can see them at a better viewpoint.

#### Preventive Action

There will be a greater emphasis on non-plastic materials for the children to play with and manager will add more messy play to the room.

## Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence of improved sensory resources and interest areas in the service.

Photograph of repositioned family wall in the Wobbler room.

## Summary Comment

The evidence submitted by the registered provider in relation to regulation 19 - Health, welfare and development of child has been reviewed and accepted.

## 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 doors leading into the premises were appropriately secured to prevent the children from exiting unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the premises.
- Cleaning agents were stored safely out of the reach of children.
- The kitchen was inaccessible to the children during the inspection.
- The services designated emergency exits were unobstructed.

### Infection Control:

- Thermostatically controlled warm water, liquid soap and paper hand towels were provided to support effective hand hygiene in the sanitary accommodation in the service.
- Tables were observed to be appropriately cleaned prior to and following snacks and meals.
- Overall, the premises, play equipment and materials were in a clean and hygienic condition.

### Administration of Medication:

- No child attending the service was observed receiving medication on the day of inspection. Medication administration forms were available to record the details of any medication administered in the service, should the need arise.

### Safe Sleep:

- A separate sleep room with 2 stackable beds was provided in the service. None of the children present on the day of inspection needed to sleep. The staff members present were aware of the safe sleep guidelines including the requirement to check sleeping children every 10 minutes noting the child's colour, breathing and position.

### Fire Safety:

- Documentary evidence was available to confirm that fire drills are completed on a monthly basis in the service.

### Non-Compliance Information

#### Infection Control:

1. The services nappy changing policy was observed not to be followed as evidenced by the following:
  - Children were observed not to have their hands washed following nappy changing.
  - The nappy changing mat was not cleaned following nappy changing.
2. A child's bottle was stored uncovered on top of the radiator cover in the hallway of the service.
3. Perishable food items provided by the parents for the children to eat in the service were not refrigerated in the care rooms on arrival to reduce the risk of bacteria growth.

### Action submitted by the Registered Provider

#### Corrective Action

#### Infection Control:

1. Staff member had a refresher course on following the policies on nappy changing insuring that hands will be washed after every change.
2. Manager has added a drinks table away from sunlight and hot areas like the radiator.
3. In the kitchen manager has made two shelves free for the children lunch boxes. These will be stored in the fridge until snack and then the children will be able to put their empty snack boxes back in their bags as they leave, this will develop their independence more.

#### Preventive Action

#### Infection Control:

1. "Wash your hands" signs in downstairs toilet.
2. A "drinks" picture has been stuck on the area that staff would like the children to store their drinks and they are placing them there with little guidance.
3. The perishable foods are stored in the fridge to prevent bacteria growth.

#### Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence of lunches stored under refrigerated conditions.

### Summary Comment

The evidence submitted by the registered provider in relation to regulation 23 - Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child has been reviewed and accepted.

## 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) A sufficient number of staff members held in-date First Aid Response (FAR) training to ensure that a person with FAR training was at all times immediately available to the children attending the service. This was evidenced in staff members' training records.

(2)(a) & (b) The first aid boxes available in the service were suitably equipped and stored in conspicuous locations on the premises and these were available for the children in attendance, in the event of an emergency.

## 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 fire fighting 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 record was maintained of fire drills which had been completed in the service. The most recent fire drill recorded as having taken place in October 2023.
- (b) A record was kept of the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises. The fire extinguishers were certified as having been serviced on the 16/02/2023 and the smoke alarms were serviced on the 06/03/23.
- (4) Notices of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire were conspicuously displayed in the premises.

### Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

#### Regulation 29 - Premises

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

- (b) safe and secure,*
- (d) cleaned, maintained, and repaired, as required, and*

#### Compliance Information

(b) The premises was found to be appropriately secured to prevent the children from exiting unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the early years' service. A doorbell was provided at the main entrance to allow parents or visitors notify staff members of their arrival to the service. The outdoor play area fully enclosed by high level fencing.

#### Non-Compliance Information

(d) Both the walls and the skirting boards in the Wobbler room were extensively chipped with making it difficult to clean the walls and skirting boards effectively.

#### Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

##### Corrective Action

(d) Registered provide has painted the skirting boards and door staple. There is no exposed chipping to make it easier to clean, the walls have had areas repainted.

##### Preventive Action

The creche was fully painted under 12 months ago, registered provider will regularly inspect the walls more often and top up where needed. The skirting boards have made a big difference, and the place looks much fresher.

### **Supporting documentation submitted**

Photographic evidence of painting completed to walls and skirting boards.

### **Summary Comment**

The evidence submitted by the registered provider in relation to regulation 29 - Premises has been reviewed and accepted.