

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015LH079
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Name of Service:	Ready Steady Grow
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Address of Service:	Killanny Community Centre, Lannatt, Corcreaghy Carrickmacross P.O., Dundalk, Co. Louth
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Eircode:	A81 AE37
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Name of Registered Provider:	Jenny Kerley
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date(s) of Inspection:	23/07/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	40	PM	39
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate Child Wellbeing Centre Castleblayney Co. Monaghan
Inspection undertaken by:	M. Flood & S. Mc. Kenna
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.
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Description of service

Ready Steady Grow is a privately owned service that commenced in 2009. It provides full day care, part time and sessional care and education to pre-school children aged 1 - 6 years. The service operates from 7.45am – 6.15pm Monday – Friday and the setting caters for a maximum of 62 children.

The service is conducted from a community centre located in a rural area bordering Co. Louth and Co. Monaghan. The service has 4 care rooms in operation on the ground floor and one room located on the 1st floor. On the day of the inspection the preschool children were attending 3 care rooms, namely, The Wobbler Room and Montessori Rooms 1 and 3. An enclosed outdoor play area is located to the side of the premises and the service also has access to an area to the rear of the premises and the activities hall which is located on the 1st floor.

Staffing

There are 23 staff employed in this service, including the registered provider, 19 childcare staff who work directly with the preschool children, 2 staff who work with children attending the school aged service and 1 staff who is engaged in catering duties.

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 and Premises. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

Inspection findings are documented in the inspection report which is first issued in draft format to the service with an opportunity to respond to any findings. Where statutory requirements are identified as not being met, the registered provider must demonstrate how they have rectified the non-compliance and will prevent any non-compliance from re occurring. The Corrective Action and Preventive Action plan (CAPA) will be used to inform decisions about compliance with regulatory requirements. Where the registered provider fails to meet the statutory requirements an escalation process may be commenced.

The inspectorate reserves the right to edit responses received for reasons including clarity, completeness and compliance with administrative and legal processes.

The contents of the report are compiled by the inspectorate body.

Acknowledgments

The inspectors wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 9 – Management and recruitment

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that-

- (a) the service has a designated person in charge and a named person who is able to deputise as required,
- (b) at all times during the period when the pre-school service is being carried on, the designated person in charge or the named person referred to in subparagraph (a) is on the premises, and
- (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) & (b) The service had a designated person in charge and a system in place to designate a named deputy person to deputise as required.

(c) When questioned staff were familiar with the management structure within the service and the roles and responsibilities of the various staff members.

(2) 23 staff files were presented for inspection and reviewed.

(a) & (b)

- There were 2 written and validated references from a past employer or an alternative source available for all 23 members of staff including the registered provider.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all 23 staff members and the service adhered to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) Following a review of the staff files presented for inspection, international police vetting and required translations were available for 2 staff members who had lived outside the Irish jurisdiction for a period greater than 6 months as an adult.

(4) Documentary evidence was available to demonstrate that 20 members of staff, including the registered provider, who worked directly with the pre-school children held at least the minimum required level 5 Childcare Qualification or a letter of equivalency.

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 inspection there were an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the service.

(2) On the day of inspection when the inspectors arrived unannounced to the service at 10.10am the following preschool care rooms were in operation, namely:

- **The Wobbler Room:** There were 15 preschool children aged 1-2 years present with 4 staff members.
- **Montessori Room 1:** There were 14 preschool children aged 3-4 years present with 3 staff members.
- **Montessori Room 3:** There were 11 preschool children aged 3-5 years present with 2 staff members.

The registered provider was present in the service and was observed working directly with the children and providing relief in the care rooms. One additional adult was also present and was engaged in catering duties. The adult:child ratios were correct.

(8)(a) Following a review of the available documentation e.g. staff rotas and children’s attendance records this information demonstrated that the registered provider ensured that there were at least 2 adults on the premises at all times.

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.

Compliance Information

On the day of the inspection the preschool children were attending 3 care rooms, namely, The Wobbler Room and Montessori Rooms 1 and 3.

(1)(a) The following examples demonstrate how the registered provider ensured that children’s learning, development, and well-being was facilitated in the service:

Basic Needs:

- Healthy eating was promoted in the service as was evidenced by the dinner and snacks provided by the service. All hot meals are provided by an external catering company and reheated by the service. On the day of the inspection the lunch time dinner provided at 12.20pm was observed to consist of a pasta vegetable gratin. Breakfast was reported to consist of breakfast cereal and was also provided by the service between 8 and 9am. The children brought in their own morning and afternoon snacks, and these were stored appropriately in the fridges in the care rooms.

Independence with feeding was promoted and staff provided support to the younger children where needed.

Snack and meal times was observed to be a social, interactive occasion with all staff and children observed seated at the tables. During this time, the children and staff were observed to chat about recent trips to the cinema.

- Potable drinking water was available for the children to access as required in all rooms. The children's drinks bottles and cups were stored in a basket located on a low-level shelf and therefore accessible for them as required.
- Nappies were changed regularly and in a timely manner with pleasant interactions observed between children and staff. The children who were toilet trained were encouraged to be independent with toileting. Discreet supervision was also provided by staff as required. Gentle handwashing reminders were also given to the children after toileting.
- In the Wobbler Room, individual child-led sleep needs were facilitated in the service as the staff followed the children's routines. New children who were settling in were provided with extra comfort and supports in transitioning to sleep time.
- The children's care needs were attended to on a regular basis for example, hands were washed before snack times and after toileting plus noses were wiped frequently. The younger children's faces were observed to be cleaned after meal times before going to sleep. Independence with self-care was also encouraged and supported.
- The children had free movement in the care rooms and all children had a change of environment to the separate outdoor areas located on the premises.

Supporting relationship around children and families

- The staff members in the service were observed to interact with the children in a warm and supportive manner. Soft tones, positive and respectful language were observed in interactions between the children and staff member for example, "*.....are you alright ?.....good.....I know its sore...are you all right...yes it was an accident.*" The children were observed to seek out the staff for assistance. For example, when tidying up after snack time and getting ready to go outside "*...will you put your snack box away first...good listening...well done...do you want help?...thank you good.....*"
- The children in the Wobbler room were observed to enjoy circle time. Conversations about colours and fruits with flash cards occurred and the children were provided with opportunities of choice at song time where they chose pictures linked to particular songs. The children were observed to be fully engaged throughout this time, displaying signs of happiness and a sense of pride in choosing their songs.
- The children appeared familiar with the staff who cared for them, and the staff were observed to be aware of each individual child's interest and likes. Where a child was observed to become unwell during their day, the staff provided extra supports and communicated with parents on this occasion.

- The staff when questioned stated that they use an electronic interactive communication system to record and share information about the children’s daily activities and care needs with parents. Pictures of activities, games, curriculum plans, and the children’s learning journeys are also shared through this ‘app.’ Partnership with parents is also supported through verbal communication at drop off and collection and for some a parental messaging group is in use. The staff have a communication group where they share information through a messaging service. The staff also report on regular staff meetings in the service.
- A key worker system was in place throughout the service. The staff when questioned were familiar with their allocated key children and this promoted the development and sustainment of relationships between the children, their parents, and the staff in the service. The staff were familiar with goals and strategies for children who required additional supports in the service and were able to discuss how these strategies are implemented and reviewed regularly.
- In all care rooms the staff were observed down on the floor with the children and to interact with the children in a warm and supportive manner reading stories, engaging in art activities, and singing songs.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 20 – Facilities for rest and play

(1) Subject to this regulation, a registered provider shall ensure that-

(b) there are adequate and suitable facilities for a pre-school child to rest during the day, and in the case of an overnight pre-school service, during the day and the night.

(3) A registered provider of a full day care service, a part-time day care service or a childminding service, other than such a service to which paragraph (2) applies, shall ensure that-

(a) a suitable, safe and secure outdoor space to which the pre-school children attending the service have access on a daily basis is provided on the premises,

Compliance Information

(1)(b)

- A suitable comfortable rest area was available in each of the care rooms, with soft seating, mats and cushions provided, should a child need to rest or take a break from activities during the day.
- There was a separate sleep room off the Wobbler Room where there were 5 standard cots available for the children aged under 2 years of age to sleep. Three stackable beds were also available for children aged over 2 to sleep, which were observed in use during the inspection. Additional stackable beds were available if required.

(3)(a) The children had access to an outdoor play area on the premises:

Area 1 was located to the side of the building which the children from the service accessed on a rotational basis. This area was gated and secured with a variety of surfaces including safety matting and tarmac. A variety of horizontal climbing boards and low-level climbing frames were available. Additional equipment included ride on cars, a balance beam, a slide and a climbing frame and large plastic blocks. A shed for the storage of toys was also available.

Area 2 was located to the rear of the community building and was partially fenced and gated. This area was used as an access area for both area 1 and the adjoining football field. The staff reported that although not used during the inspection, this area is also used for water and sand play and art activities. The staff also reported that the activities hall located on the first floor is also used for games and activities. This was not used during the inspection.

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

It was observed that the registered provider has taken the following measures to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of the pre-school children attending the service including:

General Safety:

- The external doors were appropriately secured to prevent unauthorised access to the building and to prevent children exiting the service unsupervised.
- Designated emergency exits were clear and unobstructed.
- All blind cords were restricted or inaccessible to the children.
- Highchairs were observed in use in the Wobbler Room and had safety harnesses attached.
- The kitchen area was inaccessible to the children.
- Regular head counts and checks were observed being carried out by staff when children were transitioning to and from the outdoor areas.
- Cleaning materials were stored out of the children's reach on high level shelving.

Infection Control:

- Thermostatically controlled warm water, hand soap, paper towels and pedal bins were provided in each sanitary area and care rooms.

- Handwashing was observed in the Wobbler room before snack and mealtimes, and in Montessori 1 before mealtimes, after using the toilet and after outdoor play time.
- Daily and weekly cleaning records were available and completed electronically.
- Pedal operated waste bins were observed in use and were appropriately maintained on the day of the inspection.
- Children’s soothers were stored in individual labelled containers. Staff outlined the appropriate cleaning and sterilisation procedure of soothers.
- A procedure for mouthed toys was in place, with a box labelled for storage of toys prior to being washed.
- Sanitary areas were ventilated by openable windows and mechanical ventilation.

Safe Sleep:

- Safe sleep observations were carried out and documented every 10 minutes as per national safe sleep guidelines.
- Records detailed the position, breathing pattern and colour of sleeping children.

Non-Compliance Information

The Inspectorate is not assured that adequate steps have been taken to ensure the health, safety and welfare of the pre-school children attending the service based on the observations made during the inspection:

General Safety:

1. The fence mounted yellow and orange blackboards located in the outdoor area were damaged and in a defective condition. These had sharp edges exposed which are a potential ‘pinch’ and injury risk.
2. One child attending Montessori Room 3 was observed to have whole grapes at snack time, rather than grapes cut into small pieces. This is a potential choking risk and went unnoticed by staff until it was brought to their attention by the inspector.

Infection Control:

The following cross infection risks were observed during the inspection:

3. Not all of the children’s hands were washed on return to Montessori Room 3 from outdoor play.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Actions

1. All blackboards removed from the playground and discarded in the bin. The toys and equipment in the playground will be more closely monitored for any health and safety risks to the children and staff and discarded as necessary.
2. All children's snacks will be inspected prior to consumption so that any uncut grapes or any fruit that needs cutting. Parents will be informed to cut grapes prior to sending in for snack and this will be monitored more closely by staff and brought up in regular staff meetings.
3. All signage as reminder to wash hands when returning from outdoor play will be visible on walls and children will be reminded to wash hands on returning inside. Staff will be reminded of hygiene and handwashing at staff meetings/ inductions and routine spot checks in rooms by management

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence of daily risk assessment.

Photographic evidence of outdoor area.

Evidence of information sent to parents regarding snacks and meals.

Summary Comment

The registered provider submitted details of the corrective and preventative actions taken in the service to address the non-compliances together with photographic and documentary evidence. Based on the information submitted the non-compliances identified under Regulation 23 have been addressed. This will be reviewed at the next inspection.

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) The registered provider ensured that there was a person trained as a First Aid Responder (FAR) at all times in the service. This was evidenced by the availability of up to date FAR certificates for 17 members staff.
- (2) (a) and (b) The first aid boxes were available in the service and were stored in conspicuous location where they are easily accessible in the event of an emergency.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

- A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-
- (d) cleaned, maintained and repaired, as required,

Non-Compliance Information

- (d) The corners of a soft floor mat in the Wobbler room were torn, with exposed foam and therefore could not be adequately cleaned.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Actions

The orange soft floor mat in the Wobbler Room has been removed of and disposed of. All equipment and soft floor furnishings will be inspected thoroughly and discarded if necessary and replaced with new materials.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence of daily risk assessment.

Summary Comment

The registered provider submitted details of the corrective and preventative actions taken in the service to address the non-compliance together with photographic evidence. Based on the information submitted the non-compliance identified under Regulation 29 has been addressed.