

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015LK162
--------------------------	-------------

Name of Service:	Starting Small Standing Tall
-------------------------	------------------------------

Address of Service:	Ballysimon Road, Crossagalla Industrial Estate, Ballysimon, Limerick, Co. Limerick
----------------------------	--

Eircode:	V94 R1W0
-----------------	----------

Name of Registered Provider:	Mella Byrne, Pamela Walsh
-------------------------------------	---------------------------

Service type:	Full Day, Sessional
----------------------	---------------------

Date of Inspection:	17/02/2025
----------------------------	------------

No of pre-school children:	AM	107	PM	86
-----------------------------------	----	-----	----	----

Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Tusla. Early Years Inspectorate, Estuary House, Henry St, Limerick
Inspection undertaken by:	E Browne
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
---------------------------------	----------------

Description of service

This privately owned full day care service opened in 2005. It caters for children from six months to six years of age.

It has a maximum capacity for approximately 173 children.

The opening hours are from 07:45 – 17:45 hours, Monday – Friday for 51 weeks of the year.

The premises are a 2-storey purpose built childcare facilities located in an industrial estate on the outskirts of Limerick city. The service has 9 playrooms in operation, this includes an outdoor sessional service.

A ballroom and sensory room are also available for the children's play and development.

The service has two dedicated sleep rooms, a kitchen, sanitary facilities for the children and adults. A number of outdoor play areas to the rear and side of the premises facilitate the children to spend lots of time outdoors.

Staffing

There are 2 registered providers who jointly own and manage the service. There is a deputy manager and a supervisor available each day.

There are 34 staff members employed in the service. The staff working directly with the children have an appropriate qualification in Early Childhood Care and Education.

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, 19 and 23.

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.

Additional Information

17/02/2025

An immediate action notice was issued for a non-compliance identified under Regulation 9 as one staff member employed in the service did not have the required Garda vetting disclosure received from the National Vetting Bureau of the Garda Síochána in accordance with the Act of 2012.

20/02/2025

A copy of the garda vetting for the one member of staff was sent to the inspectorate from the registered provider which addressed the non-compliance.

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

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that-

- (a) the service has a designated person in charge and a named person who is able to deputise as required,
- (b) at all times during the period when the pre-school service is being carried on, the designated person in charge or the named person referred to in subparagraph (a) is on the premises, and
- (c) there is a clear management structure in the service that identifies the lines of authority and accountability in the service and the specific roles and responsibilities of each employee and unpaid worker.

(2) A registered provider shall ensure that each employee, unpaid worker and contractor is suitable and competent taking into consideration the nature of the needs of children, including by-

- (a) consideration of references from the person's past employers, if any, and in particular the most recent employer, if any,
- (b) consideration of references from reputable sources in the case of a person who has no past employers,
- (c) consideration of the vetting disclosure received from the National Vetting Bureau of the Garda Síochána in accordance with the Act of 2012 in respect of the person, and
- (d) ensuring, insofar as is practicable, that where a person has lived in a state other than the State for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months, he or she provides police vetting from the police authorities in that state.

(4) A registered provider shall ensure that, without prejudice to the generality of paragraph (2) and subject to paragraphs (5) and (6), each employee working directly with children attending the service holds at least a major award in Early childhood Care and Education at Level 5 on the National Qualifications Framework or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

Compliance Information

- (1)
- (a) The registered provider in charge of operating the service and the named deputy person were present on the day of the inspection.
 - (b) During the period of the inspection, the registered provider and the named deputy person were present and the staff roster indicated that this person and their deputy were always available on the premises.
 - (c) There was a clear management structure that identified the lines of authority and accountability in the service and the specific roles and responsibilities of each member of the management team.
- (2) The files of 6 new staff members were viewed. Also, the garda vetting for all the other staff members including the registered providers were reviewed.

- (a) References were submitted by staff from their past employers or from other reputable sources.
- (b) Where past employers' references were not available, references from sources other than an employer were on file such as school, college and placement references.
- (c) The Garda vetting disclosure was on file for 5 of the 6 new staff members. The garda vetting disclosures for all the other staff members working in the service were viewed and the vetting for these staff members were dated within the previous three years in adherence with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice 'EYI-RN12.3 Renewal of Garda Vetting'.
- (d) The police vetting for 9 staff members who had lived in another country for longer than 6 months were on file.
- (4) All the staff members working directly with children held an appropriate qualification in Early Childhood Care and Education or an equivalent such qualification.

Non-Compliance Information

(2)(c)

Garda vetting was not on file for one member of staff. An immediate action notice was issued on site to the registered provider. Potentially not having staff appropriately vetted prior to them commencing in the service may allow inappropriate adults have access to children. The registered provider stated that the staff member left the service immediately and will not return until the vetting process has been completed, and confirmation of their clearance has been received. The Garda vetting process was initiated and in the absence of the staff member, the service adjusted the staffing to maintain the required adult-to-child ratios.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action: The registered provider stated that:

(2)(c)

The staff member was immediately removed from the service and did not return until the Garda vetting process was fully completed and clearance was confirmed.

The Garda vetting process was initiated without delay to ensure compliance with regulatory requirements.

In the absence of the staff member, staffing adjustments were made to maintain the required adult-to-child ratios and ensure the safety and well-being of all children in the service.

To prevent a similar issue from arising again, the following measures have been implemented:

Strict Pre-Employment Vetting Policy: No staff member will be permitted to start working in the service without written confirmation of Garda vetting clearance on file.

Supporting documentation submitted

A copy of the evidence was submitted.

Summary Comment

20/02/2025

A copy of the Garda vetting for the one member of staff was emailed to the Inspectorate on the 20th of February 2025.

The evidence submitted was assessed and deemed to meet the requirements of Regulation 9 (2)(c).

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)
There were 18 staff members working directly with 107 pre-school children. The registered provider and the deputy manager ensured that there were an adequate number of staff members working across all the playrooms.

(2)
The written staff roster showed that the registered providers ensured that the minimum ratio of staff to children was adhered to in the service. Additional staff were available to cover kitchen and offices duties, school collections and to care for the school aged children.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 19 - Health, welfare and development of child

(1) A registered provider shall, in providing a pre-school service, ensure that-

(a) each child's learning, development and well-being is facilitated within the daily life of the pre-school service through the provision of the appropriate activities, interaction, materials and equipment, having regard to the age and stage of development of the child, and

Compliance Information

BASIC NEEDS:

A Healthy eating policy was promoted in Starting small Standing Tall service by serving healthy nutritious hot meals and snacks, prepared fresh on-site daily. Mealtimes were supervised, with staff assisting children as needed in a relaxed atmosphere. On the day chicken curry with vegetables and rice were served for the main meal. Drinking water was easily available to children throughout the day. A supply of fruit was accessible in all rooms if children required extra snacks between meals.

The service ensured proper hygiene with sanitary facilities located next to each room. Nappy changing areas were provided for younger children, with accessible, waist-high units, while older children had bathroom facilities located next to their preschool rooms. Hot water, liquid soap, paper hand towels were located at each sink to ensure hygienic handwashing. Spare clothes, outdoor rain gear, and suitable footwear were available to ensure children could go outdoors in all weather.

There were two sleep rooms with cots provided for children between the age of 12 and 24-months. Sleep checks were monitored and documented in both areas. For toddlers over 2 years, low-level beds were provided in their rooms, with staff supervision during rest periods.

The children enjoyed regular changes of environment, spending long periods outdoors in well-equipped play areas around the premises, including a sheltered area for use in all weather conditions. For those who required a break from noisy areas of the service, a sensory room and the ballroom were accessible for small group activities.

PHYSICAL AND MATERIAL ENVIRONMENT:

The rooms at the service were planned and designed to cater to the needs of various age groups. The rooms accommodating the younger children were equipped with soft floor mats for crawling and floor-based activities, along with tents for hiding play and comfortable adult seating. Small climbing frames were available in the rooms to ensure that children had the opportunity to develop their gross motor skills in a safe and challenging environment. Toys and equipment were stored on low-level shelving, allowing children to independently select materials for play. Items of interest and visual timetables were displayed on walls at a level visible for the children.

In the Pre-school, Naíonra and ECCE rooms, there were well-developed interest areas, such as building and construction zones, art and craft stations with accessible easels, messy play areas with sand, water, and rice trays, and imaginative play spaces with home corners and dress-up clothes. Each room also featured reading areas with a variety of books. Emphasis was placed on using natural, open-ended materials, and toys and equipment were rotated to match children's interests, preferences, and abilities. The outdoor service was available for the sessional hours only. A sensory room offered a quiet, calming space with soft lighting, comfortable seating, and soothing music.

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:

All external doors were appropriately secured with a magnetic lock to prevent children accessing unsafe areas or allowing unsupervised access to the building. All those who entered or left the building signed in and out on arrival and departure.

Suitable handrails were provided on the staircase to ensure the safety of the children when using the stairs.

All highchairs used by the younger children at mealtimes were in good condition and fitted with safety harnesses.

Infection Control:

The service has updated the services nappy changing policy to include a requirement for washing children's hands after each nappy change. A new handwashing before dinner policy has been implemented.

There were pedal operated bins in place for the safe disposal of nappies to replace the old hand operated bins in the bathroom of the Toddler and Wobbler playrooms. The service was in the process of replacing the hand operated wastepaper bins with the pedal operated bins in all areas of the service

The service has addressed the issue by making necessary modifications to ensure adequate privacy for the second nappy changing unit. The second nappy changing unit was fully operational and in use, significantly reducing the risk of cross-infection by providing an additional, private changing space for the children

Non-Compliance Information

Infection Control:

There were 7 cots mattresses with no protective covers in use in the sleep room. These cots were shared between the children from the Baby and Baby Steps playrooms. This makes cleaning difficult and increases the risk of cross infection.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action: The registered provider has stated that:

Infection Control:

The protectors were promptly returned to the cots to ensure compliance with hygiene standards.

The cleaning and rotation protocol have been revised. A designated staff member will be responsible for ensuring that mattress protectors are immediately placed back on the cots after laundering.

A monitoring system has been introduced: A weekly checklist has been implemented to verify that cots are always covered.

Staff training and awareness: Staff have been reminded of the importance of infection control and the need to check for protective covers as part of their daily routine.

Additional mattress protectors have been purchased to ensure replacements are available during the laundering process, preventing any gaps in usage. These measures will ensure compliance with Regulation 23 and maintain a hygienic sleep environment for the children.

Supporting documentation submitted

Evidence of the revised cleaning and monitoring protocols were submitted to the inspectorate and receipts for the additional mattress protectors.

Summary Comment

The evidence submitted was assessed and deemed to meet the regulatory requirements of Regulation 23 Infection Control