

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015LK163
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Name of Service:	Step by Step Montessori and Afterschool
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Address of Service:	Newboro, Ballyloughnan, Patrickswell, Co. Limerick
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Eircode:	V94 C92V
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Name of Registered Provider:	Catriona Fitzgerald
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	22/02/2024
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No of pre-school children:	AM	16	PM	No.
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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
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Description of service

This sessional preschool service is located in a rural setting close to the village of Patrickswell and Adare. It provides a sessional service for children aged 2.5 – 5 years for 3 hours a day between the hours of 09.15 to 12.15 pm, Monday to Friday

A school aged service is provided in the afternoon from the premises.

The premise is a detached dwelling house with two designated playrooms, storage area, bathroom facilities for the children and an enclosed outdoor play area to the rear of the service.

Staffing

There were 2 staff members and the registered provider present in the service on the day of the inspection.

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.

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) On the day of the inspection the registered provider was the designated person in charge. There was a named person who could deputise as required.

(b) The registered provider was present in the service for the duration of the inspection.

(2)(a) There were written references from past employers available in respect of each staff, with recorded validations where required.

(b) Where past employer references were not available, references from an alternative source were provided.

(c) Vetting disclosures from the National Vetting Bureau of the Garda Síochána were available in respect of all staff members.

(d) Not applicable to this service as none of the staff had lived outside the jurisdiction.

(4) Both the registered provider and the 2 staff who work at the facility held a major award 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.

(3) Subject to paragraph (5), a registered provider of a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that at all times the minimum ratio of adults to children specified in column (3) of Part 2 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) therefore at that reference number is satisfied.

Compliance Information

(1) The service operates a morning sessional service from 9 15am to 1215 midday. There were 16 preschool children with 2 adults attending the morning session. This met the requirements of Regulation 11.

(3) At all times the registered provider ensured that the minimum ratio of adults to children was adhered to in the service.

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:

There was a healthy eating policy in place in the service. The parents supplied healthy snacks and drinks for the pre-school children. Perishable foods were stored appropriately in a fridge until required each day at the service.

Drinking water was accessible to the children at all times.

Children had unrestricted access to the bathroom facilities. Nappy changing facilities were also available if necessary. A change of clothes was available for all children if needed. Tissues and wipes were always accessible to the children and all waste was disposed of properly in foot pedal operated, lidded bins.

Children moved between 2 rooms internally in the building. Outside children had access to lots of separate play areas.

PHYSICAL AND MATERIAL ENVIRONMENT:

The indoor and the outdoor environment was welcoming and safe and provided a good range of developmentally appropriate and challenging experiences for the children. Play equipment and materials were grouped together to provide specific interest areas. Some of the areas included an imaginative home area with dolls, prams, baby clothes, toy kitchen, ovens, a construction area with blocks and building bricks, an area for art and crafts, a sensory play area and a library and reading area. Low level tables and chairs were accessible for tabletop activities. Lots of adult seating was available for staff to seat next to the children during story time. A good range of reading material was available in the library area.

Sand and water play were available outside in a sheltered area. A large garden provided space for lots of ball games with a large wooden climbing frame for risky play was accessible with shock absorbent rubber matting located under the climbing frame. Lots of bikes, trikes, bubble cars and scooters were also available outside. Two wooden sheds were set up as play areas and children could use these spaces for small group play activities working in the gravel areas, the mud kitchen with age-appropriate shovels, diggers, brushes, timber blocks of different sizes and shapes. Children spend long periods of times outdoors regardless of weather conditions.

On the day the children also had the opportunity to observe a baby lamb being bottle fed by a parent whose child attends the service. There was great excitement among the children.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 24 - Checking in and out and record of attendance

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that each pre-school child attending the service is checked in and out of the service by an employee or an unpaid worker.

(3) A registered provider shall ensure that-

(a) no person other than-

(i) pre-school child attending the service,

(ii) a person dropping or collecting such a child,

(iii) an employee, or

(iv) an unpaid worker, can enter the premises without his or her entry being approved by an employee, and

(b) a daily record in writing is kept of the entry on the premises of any such person.

Compliance Information

(1) Each child was checked in by a staff member on arrival to the service. At home time each child was checked out by a member of staff.

(3) No person other than a child attending the service, a person dropping or collecting a child, an employee or an unpaid worker could enter the premises without prior approval.

(b) All visitors were signed in and out, documenting their time of arrival and departure and the reason for their visit.

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) There were 2 staff working in the service who had up to date training in first aid response for children.
- (2) (a) The first aid boxes were safely stored in easily accessible in a conspicuous position at the premises.
- (b) The first aid boxes were available to the children attending the pre-school service at all times.

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) Records were available to show that fire drills were carried out on a monthly basis. The date of the last fire drill was the 6th of February 2024.
- (b) A record of the number, type and maintenance of firefighting equipment and smoke alarms were available on the premises. The last maintenance check for firefighting equipment was in September 2023 and for the smoke alarm system the 15th of January 2024.
- (4) The fire evacuation procedures were clearly displayed in the service and a fire assembly point was located in the outdoor area.