

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015LK164		
Name of Service:	Stepping Stones Montessori		
Address of Service:	Shanagolden National School, Shanagolden, Co. Limerick		
Eircode:	V94 XAK6		
Name of Registered Provider:	Hazel Sillery		
Service type:	Sessional		
Date of Inspection:	13/09/2023		
No of pre-school children:	AM	16	PM 0
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Tusla Early Years Inspectorate 2 nd floor Estuary House Henry Street Limerick		
Inspection undertaken by:	J Ryan		
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 and operated sessional service was established in September 2012 and provides care for pre-school children aged 2.5 – 5 years from 9.00hrs – 12.30hrs Monday – Friday for 38 weeks of the year. The service is based in the national school and can cater for up to 22 pre-school children at any one time. It is located in a rural area and comprises of one playroom, a sanitary accommodation area and an outdoor play area.

Staffing

The registered provider and two additional staff members work in the service each day and all staff have childcare qualifications.

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 the child. 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) The registered provider was the person in charge and a named person to deputise as required was available.
- (b) The designated person in charge was on the premises when the inspector arrived.

- (2)(a) Two written references from past employers were available for all staff members. The manager of the service had validated all references that were on file.
- (b) Written and verified references from reputable sources were available where required.
- (c) Garda Vetting disclosures were available for all staff members.
- (d) Police vetting was not required as no staff member had lived in another state for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months.
- (4) The staff working directly with the children attending the service held awards in Early Childhood Care and Education at Levels 5, 6 and 7 on the National Qualifications Framework.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 11 - Staffing levels

(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

(2) There were 16 pre-school children aged 3 – 4 years being supervised by 3 staff during the session. The adult/child ratio on the day of the inspection was greater than the minimum requirements.

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.*

Compliance Information

(1) A sample of 8 records for a preschool child were examined and the following information was contained on each record.

- (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.

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:

The healthy eating policy of the service detailed the requirement for parents to supply healthy snacks for their children. Snacks observed on the day of the inspection included sandwiches, crackers, fruit and yogurts. Staff sat at the tables with the children. Drinking water was available throughout the session if a child needed a drink. The children sat together around the tables and were given as much time as they needed to eat their food.

Children were toilet trained toileted independently with assistance given to those who needed it. The children were encouraged to wash their hands and use hand sanitizer at appropriate times such as after toileting and before eating. Hand washing was facilitated in the sanitary accommodation with a supply of hot and cold running water and liquid antibacterial soap.

Staff were observed to clean the tables before snacks were eaten.

Children were allowed to move freely indoors from one activity to the next for specific periods of time. A rest area was developed in the room where children could sit and relax in. The children enjoyed freedom of movement within the pre-school room. There was a plentiful supply of play props available to support sensorial play. The children were supported and encouraged to behave appropriately for their age and stage of development through having simple rules to follow and a good level of choice of activities. The adults modelled positive behaviour for the children and the children were praised for their good behaviour.

Interactions with the children were positive and caring. Children were praised, encouraged and listened to. Staff operated in partnership with parents by sharing individual records for each child which detailed their progress.

Staff and children were observed to sit in the rest area and read the child's 'Family Book' or 'All About Me Book'.

This book contained pictures of the child's family, pets and friends and it supported each child's sense of identity and belonging and helped them transition into the service. Children were observed making jigsaws on the table and on the floor. Staff also sat at tables building blocks with the children whilst also teaching the children the colour of the blocks.

Children played outdoors on the day of the inspection which supported their gross motor development and allowed greater social interaction as a group.

PHYSICAL AND MATERIAL ENVIRONMENT:

The service provided a range of developmentally appropriate experiences for the children attending. The range of toys offered stimulation to all the senses. Materials used included sensory, cause and effect, symbolic and imaginative play which supported all areas of development. Children were observed making jigsaws and playing with playdough. A timer with the traffic light colours was used to help the group transition from one activity to another. Materials and equipment were freely accessible to the children when needed, for example crayons, paper and paint were available throughout the session, art work was displayed, and items of interest were at the child's eye level on low level shelving. There were areas of interest such as home corner, library/rest area, sand play, musical instruments, jigsaws shelf, montessori materials and construction areas evident in the service. A sensory garden had been developed since the last inspection of the service.

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)The fire drills were practiced on a monthly basis. The last recorded fire drill took place in September 2023.
- (b)The firefighting equipment and smoke alarms were serviced on an annual basis, most recently in May 2023, and a record was maintained of the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms.
- (4)A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire was displayed.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

Adequate insurance was available for the sessional service to operate.