

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

<b>TUSLA Identifier:</b>	TU2015LM018		
<b>Name of Service:</b>	First Steps Creche		
<b>Address of Service:</b>	15 Dartry View, Kinlough, Co. Leitrim		
<b>Eircode:</b>	F91 VX09		
<b>Name of Registered Provider:</b>	Michelle Dolan		
<b>Service type:</b>	Full Day		
<b>Date of Inspection:</b>	16/01/2025		
<b>No of pre-school children:</b>	AM	53	PM 34
<b>Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:</b>	Early Years Inspectorate, TUSLA Child & Family Agency, Markievicz House, Barrack St, Sligo, F91 XC84		
<b>Inspection undertaken by:</b>	L. Costello and S Killeen		
<b>Title:</b>	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

### Description of service

First Steps Creche is a private full day care early years' service. This service caters for 2 to 6 years, operating from 8am to 6pm five days per week. A registered school age service is also provided.

The service is located in a housing estate, in the village of Kinlough in county Leitrim. The service operates from two semi-detached bungalows, which have been adapted to provide an early years' service. There are four care rooms, a sensory/sleep room, two kitchens, a nappy changing area and sanitary accommodation. There is an outdoor area to the front, side and rear of the premises.

### Staffing

There are a total of twelve adults employed within the service, eleven of whom work directly with the children.

The registered provider works in the service as a cook and person in charge. The registered provider and all the staff who work directly with the children on a daily basis hold the required Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) at Level 5 and above 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. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9, 11, 15, 20, 23, 26, 27 and 28. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

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/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) (b).

There was a designated person in charge and a named person to deputise as required.

(2) (a) (b).

The records of all twelve adults employed in the service were reviewed.

21 written and verified past employer references and 3 references from another source in the absence of a past employer, were available in respect of all 12 adults employed in the service.

(c)

A garda vetting disclosure was available for all twelve adults in the service. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years

- (d) International police vetting was available for the three adults that had lived outside the state for a period of longer than six consecutive months.
- (4) Eleven adults had attained major awards in Early childhood care and education at level 5 or above on the national framework of qualifications, or qualifications deemed by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) to meet the regulatory requirement.

### 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) There were an adequate number of adults working directly with children attending the preschool service. There were ten adults working directly with the 53 children in the morning of the unannounced inspection and six adults working directly with 32 children in the afternoon. There was an additional staff member available to cover breaks throughout the day.

(2)

The minimum adult to child ratios were provided on the morning of the unannounced inspection in accordance with the required ratios considering the ages of the children and the length of time each child spent in the service as outlined below:

- Rainbow Room: 3 adults cared for 14 children aged from 3 to 5 years of age.
- Shooting stars: 2 adults cared for 12 children aged 4 to 5 years of age.
- Sunshine: 2 adults cared for 12 children aged 3 to 5 years of age.
- Little sparkles: 3 adults cared for 12 children aged 2 to 4 years of age.

At 13:30 in the afternoon the following ratios were observed:

- Rainbow Room: 2 adults cared for 9 children aged from 3 to 5 years of age.
- Shooting stars: 1 adult cared for 7 children aged 4 to 5 years of age.
- Sunshine: 1 adult cared for 8 children aged 3 to 5 years of age.
- Little sparkles: 2 adults cared for 10 children aged 2 to 4 years of age

(8)

The registered provider ensured there was at least two adults in the premises at all times as demonstrated on a review of the roster.

### 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.*

*(4) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing referred to in paragraph (1) is retained for a period of 2 years from the date on which the child to whom it relates ceases to attend the service.*

## Compliance Information

(1) (a-i)

Twelve sample records of the children attending the service were reviewed. The required information including the authorisation to collect the child, details of illness or special needs of the child, emergency contact and record of immunisations were fully completed for each child.

(3) (c)

The records in writing were available for inspection by the early year's inspector.

(4)

The person in charge confirmed that the records are retained for the required period as set out in the regulations

### 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-

(a) having regard to the number of pre-school children attending the service, their respective ages and the amount of time they spend on the premises, there are adequate and suitable facilities for each child 19 to play indoors and, where required by these Regulations, outdoors, during the day, and

(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.

#### Compliance Information

(1) (a)

The service consisted of four large playrooms each one assigned for use by different age groups of children. There were adequate and suitable indoor play facilities available in each room for the age and stage of children attending. The rooms presented as bright and visually appealing spaces with an orderly arrangement of play equipment and materials set into clearly defined areas of interest. These included arts and crafts, construction, small world items, dress up props, play kitchen areas, library's, sensory tables, relaxing areas, problem solving toys and wide range of manipulate play resources. Open low level shelving units enabled all items to be readily accessible to the children and suitable sized tables and chairs were available for tabletop activities.

'Rainbow room' catered for children preparing for their transition to national school and this was evident by their artwork decorating the walls. The children were observed to move freely around the care rooms, directing their own sense of play and all care rooms were set up to facilitate choice for the preschool child. Age-appropriate toys and resources were available in each of the care rooms, ensuring children had opportunities for imaginary play, sensory play and gross and fine motor skill development. A library area was located in all care rooms offering opportunities for language development.

Furniture in all care rooms were age and size appropriate, ensuring comfort and safety for the preschool children. The outdoor area offered an alternative environment for the preschool child where children were free to explore, run and climb. Resources included wooden playhouses, mud kitchens, slides, swings, climbing frames, balance bikes, trikes and tractors, encouraging opportunities for role play, imagination and development of gross motor skills.

(1) (b)

Rest areas were provided in all care rooms with the provision of soft floor matting and cushions. A designated sleep room was available that was decorated with colours to encourage rest and relaxation.

Floor mats were available for the preschool children with cellular blankets. Floor mats were also provided in the sunshine room for those children who wished to avail of rest time in their designated care room.

### 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 main entrance into the service was found to be secured upon the inspectors unannounced arrival to the service, which prevented persons entering unauthorised and children from leaving the building unsupervised.
- The outdoor area was secured by high level wooden fencing with secure gates.
- All cleaning products in the care rooms were stored on high level shelving out of the reach of children.
- Materials and resources were visibly clean and maintained in a good state of repair.
- The kitchen was inaccessible to the preschool children.
- Leads and flexes were secure and inaccessible to the preschool children.
- Waste bins were stored out of reach of children.
- Water temperatures on the day in the sunshine room sanitary area were measured at 50°C when tested by the inspectors at 11:28. This was immediately brought to the attention of the person in charge. The safety valve was checked and was in the wrong position, this was immediately corrected and water temperature checked at 11:48 were recorded at 37.7°C. The person in charge ensured that this will be checked daily.
- Shaving foam for arts and crafts was stored on shelving in the shooting stars room, when brought to the attention of staff that this product could not be used, it was removed immediately.
- The service took measures to ensure safety at collection with information of who was authorised to collect displayed for staffs use. Staff also recorded who dropped or collected the preschool child in the attendance book.
- Risk assessments were in place for outdoor play, ensuring the area was free from hazards.

### Infection Control:

- Tables were observed to be cleaned prior to mealtimes and after messy play and snack times in all care rooms.
- The materials and resources throughout the service were visually clean, with cleaning schedules displayed and up to date in each care room.
- Children were observed to wash their hands regularly including before snacks and meals and after messy play.
- Child friendly hand wash posters with picture instructions were placed above the wash basins.

### Administration of Medication:

- One child attending the service was prescribed anti-seizure medication, on interview staff members were knowledgeable about the steps to take should intervention be required. A detailed plan outlining the steps to take was available for staff.

### Safe Sleep:

- A designated sleep room was in place and floor mats provided for those children over 2 that required a sleep in the service.
- Sleep logs were completed for children at intervals of ten minutes.

### Fire Safety:

- All emergency exit doors were free of hazards ensuring safe evacuation routes.
- There was evidence of staff fire training within 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.
- (2) The record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection by-
- (a) a parent or guardian of a pre-school child attending or proposing to attend the pre-school service,
  - (b) an employee, and
  - (c) an authorised person.
- (3) A registered provider shall ensure that a record referred to in paragraph (2) is retained for a period of 5 years after its creation
- (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) (b)

The registered provider ensured that emergency evacuation drills take place on a monthly basis in the service, the most recent one on the 5<sup>th</sup> of December 2024. A record of all firefighting equipment was available with the most recent maintenance date of the 3<sup>rd</sup> of December 2024.

(2) (c)

These records were made available on the day to the authorised person.

(3)

The registered provider is aware of the regulatory requirement to retain these records for a period of five years.

(4)

Fire evacuation procedures were clearly displayed in the care rooms and hallways.

## Part VI - Safety

### Regulation 27 – Supervision

*A registered provider shall ensure that pre-school children attending the service are supervised at all times.*

#### Compliance Information

Supervision across all care rooms was adequate on the day of inspection. Supervision is primarily by sight. In all care rooms staff members worked well together ensuring that they were positioned to supervise all children in the care room, similarly in the outdoors staff members positioned themselves strategically to ensure all children were in sight at all times.

At mealtimes, staff members sat alongside the preschool children, offering support while promoting independence.

Independence was encouraged at toileting and staff members supervised by standing outside the door, maintaining dignity and respect and offering prompts and encouragement as required.

There was one designated sleep room where two children slept in the afternoon. A further two children slept on floor beds in the sunshine room. Supervision was by sight and ten-minute observations.

## Part VI - Safety

### Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

#### Compliance Information

There was evidence of a current insurance cover valid until the 27<sup>th</sup> of March 2025. The insurance provided cover for 55 Children.