

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015LS047
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Name of Service:	Stepping Stones Early Years Service
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Address of Service:	Old Boy's School, Gash, Castletown, Co. Laois
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Eircode:	R32 F859
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Name of Registered Provider:	Leslie Hogan
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	06/11/2024
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No of pre-school children:	AM	29	PM	N/A
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Tusla, Child and Family Agency, Primary Care Centre, Church Avenue, Tullamore, Co Offaly.
Inspection undertaken by:	K. Murphy
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

The age range of children that the service is registered to accommodate is 2 to 6 years of age. The service operates between the hours of 09:00 and 12:00 on a Monday to Friday basis. The service is operated by an independent provider.

The Early Years' Service is located in an adapted single storey premises. Two pre-school rooms and an office/kitchenette are provided. An additional indoor/ outdoor sheltered area, "the rainbow room" can be accessed directly from the entrance hall. The community playground is situated on the grounds of the service and is available for use by the children. The service is situated in the village of Castletown, County Laois.

Staffing

The registered provider, four staff members and a student on work placement were present on 06 November 2024.

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 co-operation 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.*

(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 and a named person to deputise were available in the service.

(b)

The registered provider was present during the inspection.

Seven staff files including the registered provider and the student were reviewed and the following was noted:

(2)(a)

The required number of written validated references were available from past employers in respect of the files reviewed.

- (b)
The required number of written validated references were available from a source other than a past employer in respect of the files reviewed.
- (c)
A Garda Vetting disclosure was available in respect of the files reviewed. The service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
- (d)
Police vetting was not required as no staff member had lived outside the state for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months.
- (4)
Staff members working directly with children as part of the adult to child ratio held qualifications at levels 5 to 8 in Early Childhood Care and Education on the National Framework of Qualifications.

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 ratio of adults to children was maintained during the inspection.
- (3)
There were twenty-nine children attending the session supervised directly by five adults.

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)
In a sample review of twelve records information relating to (a)(b)(c)(d)(e)(f)(g)(h) and (i) was available in respect of children attending the service.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 16 – Record in relation to pre-school service

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of the following information in relation to the service:

- (a) the name, position, qualifications and experience of the person in charge and of every other employee, unpaid worker and contractor;
- (b) details of the class of service and the age profile of children for which the service is registered to provide services;
- (c) details of the adult: child ratios in the service;
- (d) the type of care or programme provided in the service;
- (e) the facilities available;
- (f) the opening hours and fees;
- (h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis;
- (i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;
- (j) details of any medication administered to a pre-school child attending the service with signed parental consent;
- (k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.

Compliance Information

(1)

The service kept and maintained written records of information in relation to the service in accordance with Regulation 16 (1)(a)(b)(c)(d)(e)(f)(h)(i)(j) and (k).

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 17 – Information for parents

A registered provider shall ensure that a parent or guardian of a child proposing to attend the service is provided with the information referred to in subparagraphs (a) to (g) of Regulation 16(1).

Compliance Information

A parent handbook was available containing the details required in accordance with Regulation 16 (1)(a)-(g).

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

(1)(a)

The children were supported to be self-caring, suitable to their age and stage of development. Children used the toilet independently and regular hand washing was supervised by an adult.

Adults were observed to be positive towards children evidenced by individual names used, eye contact and praise for children on completion of activities. The children were encouraged to be independent and their choices were supported. Adults were observed to offer support and praise to each child for their involvement in activities.

Low level tables and chairs and low-level shelving with equipment and materials were accessible to the children in the pre-school rooms. A range of developmentally appropriate experiences were available for the children.

Individual preferences were accommodated as to what and how long children wished to engage with specific activities.

Materials included paint, modelling dough, dolls, dolls houses, buggies, puzzles, blocks, trucks, animals, and fine motor skill toys including pegboards, jigsaws, and shape sorters. Children's artwork and seasonally themed decorations were noted.

A combination of notebooks and verbal handover keeps parents informed of the events and activities taking place in the service. Individual scrap books provided a written and visual record of each child's progress in the service.

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.

(4) Where outdoor space to which the pre-school children attending the service have access is provided on the premises of a sessional pre-school service other than such a service to which paragraph (2) applies, a temporary pre-school service or a pre-school service in a drop-in centre, the registered provider shall ensure that such outdoor space is suitable, safe and secure.

Compliance Information

(1)(a)

Adequate and suitable indoor and outdoor facilities were provided on the premises.

(b)

Soft furnishings provided a suitable relaxation area in the pre-school rooms.

(4)

A sheltered outdoor play area with an artificial grass surface area was accessed directly from the entrance hall. This area was equipped with a variety of sensorial play equipment, a home corner area and various building and construction activities.

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 entrance to the service was secure to ensure the safety of the children within.

The service met the necessary safety requirements in respect of the indoor environment, toys and equipment and the safe storage of cleaning agents.

Infection Control:

The premises were visually clean. All toys and materials were easily cleanable. Cleaning schedules were available and reviewed. Warm water and hand paper towels and liquid soap was available in the sanitary accommodation.

The temperature of the water recorded at the wash hand basins was approximately 38 degrees Celsius.

Children were observed to wash their hands before snacks and after using the toilet. Staff were observed to wash their hands during the inspection.

A fridge was available for the storage of non-perishable goods in the kitchenette.

Administration of Medication:

Administration of medication documentation was available in the service if required. Temperature reducing medication was available in the service if a child presented with a high temperature and stored safely in the service.

Fire Safety:

Emergency exits were unobstructed throughout the service. A fire assembly point was noted to the front of the premises.

Outing:

Documentation was available for review in respect of outings from the service to the community playground.

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)

One adult was qualified in first aid response (FAR) and available during the hours of operation. Five adults completed paediatric first aid training (PFA) on 08 October 2024.

(2)(a)

A first aid box was available in a prominent location in the service.

(b)

A first aid box was readily available to children in the pre-school 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 firefighting 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)

A written record for the completed monthly fire drills was available on the premises. The most recent fire drill was recorded as taking place on 02 October 2024.

- (b)
A record was available demonstrating the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms on the premises. The firefighting equipment was serviced in February 2024. The smoke alarms were serviced in August 2024.
- (4)
A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire was displayed in a conspicuous position in the pre-school rooms.

Part VI - Safety
Regulation 28 - Insurance
<i>A registered provider shall ensure that the pre-school service is adequately insured.</i>
Compliance Information
There was evidence of current insurance cover for the number of children attending the service and the expiry date noted was 27 March 2025.