

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015MH050
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Name of Service:	First Step Lagore Community Childcare Ltd
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Address of Service:	Lagore Road, Dunshaughlin, Co. Meath
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Eircode:	A85 FE09
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Name of Registered Provider:	Marie Daly
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	17/02/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	55	PM	39
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Tusla Early Years Inspectorate Meath Child & Parent Support Hub, Commons Road, Navan, Co. Meath
Inspection undertaken by:	AM Cunningham & D Murray
Title:	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
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Description of service

First Steps Lagore Community Childcare LTD provides full day care, part time and sessional care to children aged between 0 to 6 years. The service is open Monday to Friday from 07.30 to 18.30. Eligible children avail of the state funded Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme for 3 hours per day over 38 weeks of the year within part- or full-time attendance. The service operates from a purpose-built building containing six rooms, namely the Nursery Room (not in use on the day of inspection), the 1-2 room, the 2-3 Room, Senior 3-5 room, Afterschool room, a kitchen, sanitary facilities (two nappy changing areas) and 2 sleep rooms. An outdoor play area is located to the rear of the premises.

Staffing

There were 20 staff members employed in the service, this includes the manager and two assistant managers. also a cook, cleaner and two staff who work with school aged children only. On the day of inspection, the manager, 2 assistant managers, 13 staff members providing direct care to children, a cook, a cleaner, and two staff employed to care for school aged children were present.

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

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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 inspectors wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the manager, assistant managers, 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*

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(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.

(6A) Paragraph (4) shall not apply to an employee of a registered provider where - (a) the registered provider receives funding for the employment of the employee pursuant to a scheme funded by the Minister and known as the Access and Inclusion Model, and (b) the employment of the employee is for the purpose of providing support, pursuant to the scheme referred to in subparagraph (a), for a child attending the service to enable the child to participate in the programme known as the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) funding Programme."

Compliance Information

(1) (a) The service had a designated person in charge and a named person to deputise as required.

(b) A designated person in charge was on the premises when the inspectors arrived unannounced to carry out the inspection.

(2) (a)&(b) Nine staff files were reviewed. The remainder of the staff files were reviewed at a previous inspection and compliance achieved.

Eighteen validated written references were available either from a past employer or from a reputable source.

(c) Garda vetting disclosure was available for the 9 adults. The service also 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 resided outside the jurisdiction for a period of more than 6 consecutive months as an adult.

(4) The six new staff members who provided direct care to children had a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 and above on the National Framework of Qualifications or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

(6) (a) One staff member was employed under the scheme known as the Access and Inclusion Model.

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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) During the period of inspection there was an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the pre-school service.
- (2) On the day of inspection, the following adult to child ratios were observed when the service was operating at capacity:
- The rooms were as follows:
- **The Nursery Room:** not in use on the day of inspection.
 - **The 1-2 Room:** Two staff cared for 5 preschool children, ranging in age from 1 year to 2 years. All children were attending on full day care.
 - **The 2–3 Room:** Three adults cared for 9 preschool children ranging in age from 2 to 3 years, all children attending full day care.
 - **The 3-5 Room:** Two staff cared for 8 preschool children, ranging in age from 3 to 5 years, attending on full day care.
 - **The 3-5 Daycare Preschool Room:** Three staff cared for 19 preschool children ranging in age from 3 to 5 years, 17 children were attending on full day care and 2 children were attending a sessional service.
 - **The Preschool Room 3:** Three staff cared for 14 preschool children ranging in age from 2 years 9 months to 4 years, all children were attending a sessional service operating from 9.30am to 12.30pm.

The manager was also available to the care room when required.

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(8) (a) The registered provider ensured that 2 adults were present on the premises at all times.

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 of the Infants and Children:

- The snacks and meals on the day of inspection were served at appropriate times and children were able to access their drinks throughout the day; the children's reusable water bottles were stored on low-level shelves. Assistance was given to the children that required help with feeding and opening packaging and children were observed to be self-sufficient where possible.
- The inspector was informed by staff that nappy changing was carried out at designated daily intervals and as the need arose. Older children were encouraged to use sanitary facilities independently, with supervision and verbal reminders regarding hand washing provided as needed.
- Within the care rooms, adequate space was available to accommodate a range of activities, such as messy play, use of wheeled toys, tabletop play, construction activities and imaginary play.
- A relaxed and calm environment was provided for the children, and the adults were observed to speak kindly and encouraging to the children.
- During discussion with staff in the 1-2 room, and observation on the day of inspection, it was noted that in addition to facilitating routine nap times, staff also accommodated children to sleep according to their requirements, for example when a child displayed signs of tiredness.

Supporting Relationships Around Children:

- Each staff member was assigned to a care room. The children knew and were accustomed to the staff and staff were observed to spend time comforting the children as needed. When a child was observed to require comfort in the 1-2 room, a staff member cuddled them and walked around holding them to soothe them. Once comforted they were able to return to playing.

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- Family trees were displayed in the care rooms which supported the children's sense of identity and belonging.
- Transitions were managed well with staff informing children when they were moving from one activity to the next, such as when moving from free play to snack time.
- There was a daily routine in place in each learning room which provided the children with opportunities for child-initiated play, adult-directed activities, circle time and outdoor play.

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-*
- (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.*
- (3) A registered provider of a full day care service, a part-time day care service or a childminding service, other than such a service to which paragraph (2) applies, shall ensure that-*
- (a) a suitable, safe and secure outdoor space to which the pre-school children attending the service have access on a daily basis is provided on the premises,*

Compliance Information

- (1)(b) There are two cot rooms available in the service, one in the Nursery room with 3 standard cots and one in the 1-2 room with 5 standard cots for younger children requiring sleep. Within the care rooms there were mats and cushions for children to take a break from activities and rest, if needed. Stackable beds were available for older children requiring sleep.
- (3)(a) There were 3 outdoor spaces in total which were divided by fencing and secured with walls, railings with 2 secure side gates. The surface area consisted of a foam low impact surface and a large grass area

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Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 21 – Equipment and materials

A registered provider shall ensure that there is adequate and suitable furniture, play and work equipment and materials available on the premises of the pre-school service.

Compliance Information

The indoor environments were inviting and offered the children a rich context for varied multi-sensory learning experiences. The children had access to multi-sensory play in the morning such as playdough, water and sand. The book corner in each learning room was furnished with soft furnishings, which supported the children to relax and engage with the books. Materials and equipment were available on low level shelving in the care rooms. This assisted children to select and replace items of interest independently. The rooms were bright and airy with artwork displayed. Home corners, construction areas, arts and craft were available.

Some of the equipment in the outdoor spaces included wooden activity units, mud kitchens, wooden picnic benches, slide and swings, wooden stationary train, activity trays, climbing ramps, toy cars and push along toys.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 22 – Food and drink

A registered provider shall ensure that adequate and suitable, nutritious and varied food and drink is available for each pre-school child attending the pre-school service.

Compliance Information

The service provides all snacks and meals to the children attending on a full day care basis, prepared on site by the chef. A menu plan with a varied and nutritional choice of food to include meat, fish, chicken and a vegetarian option was available and on display in the service.

The morning snack was served at 10am and consisted of a selection of a scone and fresh fruit. Dinner was served between 11:45am to 12.30pm which was spaghetti bolognese, an alternative was available, if required. An evening snack was served between at 3 pm which consisted of pancakes and fruit.

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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 front door of the service was secured, a staff member answers the door to facilitate visitors to gain access. This minimised the risk of unauthorised persons gaining access to the service.
- The cleaning agents were stored on high shelving or secured cupboards, out of the reach of children.
- Toys and play equipment were safe for the age group using them, in good condition, and free from pinch and crush points, exposed bolts or sharp edges.
- High- level fencing was provided in the outdoor play area, at the side of the building.

Safe Sleep:

Safe sleep practices were observed in the service as demonstrated by the following examples:

- Temperature of the cot room was maintained between 16 to 20⁰ C and between 18 to 22⁰ C in the care rooms used for sleep.
- A sleep log was available to record the position, colour and breathing pattern on all sleeping children at 10 minutes intervals.
- Children sleeping on sleep mats were supervised at all times.

Fire Safety:

The following Fire Safety practices were observed in the service as demonstrated by the following examples:

- All emergency exit doors were accessible in the event of an evacuation.
- Fire drills were recorded on a monthly basis.

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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.

Compliance Information

(1) Records demonstrated that the date and time of attendance and departure in respect of each pre-school child were recorded on a daily basis.

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) The service provided evidence that persons had up to date First Aid Responders course and was available at all times to the children attending the pre-school service.

(2)(a) and (b) A suitably equipped first aid box was available and safely stored in the premises

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.

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Compliance Information

- 1)(a) A written record was available of the fire drills completed in the service. The last recorded fire drill took place on the 30/01/2026.
- (b) A record was maintained of the mains powered smoke alarms and firefighting equipment on the premises. The mains powered smoke alarms were last serviced on the 24/04/2025. The firefighting equipment was last serviced in 31/07/2025.
- (4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire was conspicuously displayed in the premises

Part VI – Safety

Regulation 28 – Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The registered provider ensured that the service was adequately insured for 90 children at any one time attending for full day care. The policy showed that the service was insured from 28/03/2025 to 27/03/2026.