

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015MH050
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Name of Service:	First Steps 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(s) of Inspection:	06/08/2024
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Date 2 of Inspection:	07/08/2024
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No of pre-school children:	AM	27	PM	27
	AM	26	PM	26
Day 2	AM	26	PM	26

Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Tusla Early Years Inspectorate Family Resource Centre, Commons Road, Navan, Co. Meath
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Inspection undertaken by:	A M Cunningham & D Murray
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Title:	Early Years Inspectors
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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 full day and part time care service is located in a town in rural county Meath, providing a service for 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 maximum number the service can accommodate is 80 preschool children. The service operates from a purpose-built building containing six rooms catering for preschool children, namely the Nursery Room (not in use on the days of inspection), the Toddler/Wobbler Room, the 2-3 Room, Junior 3-5 room (closed on the days of inspection), Senior 3-5 room, Junior afterschool room and an Afterschool room, a kitchen, sanitary facilities (two nappy changing areas) and 2 sleep rooms. Additionally, an outdoor play area was available.

Staffing

There were 23 staff members employed in the service, this includes the manager and two assistant managers. Two staff employed at reception, a cook, and three staff who work with school aged children only.

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 inspectors wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the 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

(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 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) Twenty-three staff files were reviewed.

(a)&(b)Forty-six validated written references were available either from a past employer or from a reputable source.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for the twenty-three staff members. However, the service did not adhere to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years. Please refer to the information outlined under regulation 23 of this report.

(d) Police vetting was available for two staff members who had resided outside the jurisdiction for a period of more than 6 consecutive months as an adult.

(4) All staff members providing 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.

Non-Compliance Information

(2)(d) Three staff members who lived outside the state for more than 6 consecutive months did not have police vetting. One staff member had police vetting available, but it was not translated to English to determine its validity.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

Please see attached the policy vetting data requested.

The service will ensure that police vetting is on the staff members file for future inspection.

Supporting documentation submitted

Await police vetting for the staff members.

Summary Comment

The non-compliance in relation to police vetting remains outstanding.

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 was an adequate number of adults working directly with the 27 preschool children attending the service on day one of inspection and there was an adequate number of staff with the 26 preschool children attending on day two of the inspection. Additionally, four staff members worked with the school aged children with an additional staff member working from 1.30pm to 6pm. The manager was available to provide support to the staff in the care rooms if required.
- (2) The correct adult/child ratio was maintained in the service throughout the inspection.

Day One: 6th August 2024:

The rooms were as follows:

- **The Nursery Room:** not in use on the day of inspection.
- **The Toddler/Wobbler Room:** Two staff cared for 2 preschool children, ranging in age from 1 year 5 months to 2 years 1 month. Both children were attending on full day care.
- **The 2 – 3 Room:** two adults cared for 6 preschool children ranging in age from 2 to 3 years, all children attending full day care.
- **The Senior 3-5 Room:** Four staff cared for 13 preschool children, ranging in age from 3 to 5 years, attending on full day care.
- **The Junior Afterschool Room:** One staff cared for 6 preschool children ranging in age from 4 to 5 years, all attending on full day care.
- **School Aged Room:** Four staff cared for 21 school aged children all attending full day care. An additional staff member worked in this room from 1.30pm to 6pm.

The manager was also available to the care rooms where required.

Day Two: 7th August 2024:

The rooms were as follows:

- **The Nursery Room:** not in use on the day of inspection.
- **The Toddler/Wobbler Room:** Two staff cared for 2 preschool children, ranging in age from 1 year 5 months to 2 years 1 month. Both children were attending on full day care.
- **The 2 – 3 Room:** Two adults cared for 6 preschool children ranging in age from 2 years to 3 years, all children attending full day care.

- **The Senior 3-5 Room:** Four staff cared for 11 preschool children, ranging in age from 3 years to 5 years, attending on full day care.
- **The Junior Afterschool Room:** One staff cared for 7 preschool children ranging in age from 4 years to 5 years, all attending on full day care.
- **School Aged Room:** Four staff cared for 15 school aged children all attending full day care. An additional staff member worked in this room from 1.30pm to 6pm.

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

(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,

Compliance Information

(1)(a)

Basic Needs:

- Healthy eating was promoted within the service. Adequate, suitable, nutritious, and varied food and drink was observed to be available for each pre-school child attending the service. Each child was given enough time to eat and enjoy their snack and meal without being rushed.
- The privacy and dignity of each child was respected. Toileting and nappy changing were carried out in a sensitive manner. Each child has access to a change of clothes, if needed.
- The children in the Preschool rooms were encouraged and supported to manage their own personal care appropriate to their own level of independence. Regular hand washing was observed by the children.
- The children enjoyed freedom of movement in the care rooms in use.
- Children enjoyed a variety between indoor and outdoor play. There was a variety of themes in the care rooms ranging from "The Beach" to "Dinosaurs" with the children's art work displayed to reflect these themes.

Supporting Relationships around the Children:

- The children's need for rest, relaxation and comfort was met as each of the care rooms were provided with a rest area consisting of soft matting and cushions. The children were able to access the rest area as they chose for play or quiet time.
- The service showed a positive regard towards the families of the children and family links were nurtured in the service with family photographs at children's level in the care rooms. The children showed confidence around the staff members and an eagerness to engage with them in conversations and play. The children appeared comfortable, happy and relaxed in their environment.

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 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.

(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, or

(b) Where no such space is provided, the pre-school children attending the service have access on a daily basis to a suitable outdoor space.

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 Toddler/Wobbler room with 5 standard cots for children under 2 years 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 the children over 2 years 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.

Non-Compliance Information

While there was adequate space between cots as only two cots were in use on the day of inspection, when the service is operating at full capacity, 50cm distance would not be maintained between cots.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The registered provider stated that only three children would be using the room until October, so two cots were removed from the cot room.

There is a baby/nursery room which is not in use, which can be turned into a cot room going forward.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence of cots removed submitted to the inspectorate.

Summary Comment

The response from the registered provider has been reviewed. The assurances given by the registered provider have been accepted.

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

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 had a weekly menu plan with a variety of food ranging from meat, fish and poultry all prepared onsite by the cooks. On the day of inspection at 10am the children had a snack of banana, toast and grapes. Dinner was served between 12 midday and 12.15pm which consisted of pasta with sauce and garlic bread. Afternoon snack was served between 3.00pm which consisted of custard and madeira cake. Water was the drink of choice.

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 following safety measures were in place on the day of inspection:

- The main door to the service was secured and the outdoor spaces were enclosed and had secure gates. These security measures ensured that a child did not exit unsupervised and restricted unauthorised persons from gaining access to the service and outdoor spaces.
- All cleaning agents were stored out of reach of the children.
- All furniture and display units had a stable base with no risk of toppling identified.

Safe Sleep:

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

- The temperature of the cot room was maintained between 16 to 20⁰ C while children were sleeping.
- A sleep log recording the position, colour and breathing pattern was recorded at 10 minutes intervals on all sleeping children.

Fire Safety:

The following fire safety measures were observed:

- Fire drills were conducted on a monthly basis.
- The emergency exit doors were unobstructed.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

Garda vetting was available for 6 staff members. However, these vetting disclosures were not dated within the previous three years in adherence to with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice 'EYI-RN12.3 Renewal of Garda Vetting'.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

Vetting was sought and please see them attached.

The service will ensure to reapply for the vetting at 30 month period to ensure they in are returned within the 36 month period.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

Garda vetting has been submitted to the Early Years inspectorate.

Summary Comment

The response from the registered provider has addressed the noncompliance in Regulation 23.

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

(3)(a) All persons were approved by an employee prior to entry to the pre-school service.

(b) Visitors were announced and approved by an authorised staff member on arrival, the visitors' details were entered into the visitors' book.

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.

Compliance Information

(1)(a) Records are available to show that fire drills were carried out on a monthly basis. The last recorded fire drill was on the 31/07/2024.

(b) A record of the number, type and maintenance of firefighting equipment and smoke alarms were available on the premises. The firefighting equipment was serviced in October 2023. The smoke alarms were last serviced on 07/08/2023.

(4) The fire evacuation procedures were displayed in conspicuous positions on 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 80 children at any one time attending for full day care. The policy showed that the service was insured from 28th March 2024 to the 27th March 2025.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-

(d) cleaned, maintained and repaired, as required,

Non-Compliance Information

(d) The covering on the cupboard under the sink in the Wobbler/Toddler room, Junior preschool room and Senior 3-5 room was defective and peeling away therefore making it difficult to clean effectively.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The maintenance team have sourced a supplier and the doors are ordered, once ready they will be fitted immediately. By having a better quality door, we are hopeful that the lamination will not peel off.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence of the doors repaired has been submitted to the inspectorate.

Summary Comment

The response from the registered provider addresses the non compliance in Regulation 29.