

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015MH123		
Name of Service:	Little Steps Pre-School Ltd		
Address of Service:	Mullingar Road, Ballivor, Co. Meath		
Eircode:	C15 F720		
Name of Registered Provider:	Florence Hamilton		
Service type:	Sessional		
Date of Inspection:	11/06/2024		
No of pre-school children:	AM	25	PM 0
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Tusla Early Years Inspectorate Family Resource Centre, Commons Road, Navan, Co. Meath		
Inspection undertaken by:	D. Murray		
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

Little Steps Pre-School Ltd provides a sessional service to children from 2 to 6 years and participates in the Early Childhood Care and Education Programme (ECCE). The hours of operation are from 08:45am to 11:45 am weekdays. No afternoon session is operating at present. The service is situated in a separate building beside the registered providers home and consists of 1 care room with sanitary facilities. An outdoor space is located to the rear of the premises

Staffing

The registered provider employs 2 childcare staff members. Present on the day of inspection were the registered provider and 1 childcare staff member.

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.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9,11,19,20,21,23,25,26 & 28 however, on inspection additional non-compliance which posed a risk was identified under Regulation 8 & 29. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulation 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.

Additional Information

On the 11/06/24 the service was operating outside its registration status as the service was registered for 22 children with 25 children present on the morning of the inspection.

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 II - Registration and Register

Regulation 8 - Notification of change in circumstances

(1) A registered provider of a pre-school service other than a temporary pre-school service shall, subject to paragraph (3), notify the Agency in writing of any proposed change in the details in relation to the pre-school service contained in the register pursuant to section 58C(2) of the Act or Regulation 7(2) at least 60 days before it is proposed that the change would take effect.

Non-Compliance Information

(1) On the morning of the Inspection the service was operating outside the remit of its registration status as the service was registered for 22 children with 25 children present.

The following was noted on previous dates:

29/05/24 There were 24 children present with 2 adults.

05/06/24 There were 23 children present with 2 adults.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(1) The registered provider is intending to run a morning and afternoon session from September 2024 to accommodate the additional children.

The registered provider will ensure that no more than 22 children are accommodated in the service on any 1 day.

Summary Comment

The registered provider has given assurances that the numbers of children will not exceed the numbers that the service is registered for. This response has been reviewed and accepted. The numbers of children attending will be reviewed at the next 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 service had a designated person in charge and a named person to deputise as required.

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

(2) (a)&(b) On the day of the inspection 3 staff files were reviewed.

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

(c) Garda vetting disclosure was available for the 3 staff members. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) Not applicable as according to the documents reviewed no staff member had resided outside the jurisdictions for a period of more than 6 consecutive months as an adult.

(4) Two childcare staff 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) (a)&(b) One staff member did not have 2 validated written references either from a past employer or from a reputable source.

(4) One staff member did not have adequate supporting documentation to demonstrate that they had a childcare qualification.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(2)(a)&(b) This staff member is starting work in the service from September 2024. Two validated written references either from a past employer or from a reputable source will be sought before she commences employment.

The registered provider will ensure that all documentation is received before a staff member commences employment.

(4) A childcare qualification has been put into the staff members file and will be available for future inspections.

Supporting documentation submitted

Qualification for 1 staff member.

Summary Comment

(2) (a)&(b) The registered provider in the Corrective Action and Preventive Action plan has not addressed the non-compliances as 2 validated references has not been forwarded to the Inspectorate. This non-compliance remains outstanding.

(4) The registered provider submitted evidence of the childcare qualification for the staff member which has addressed the non-compliance and they have given assurances that qualifications will be available for inspection going forward.

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.*

Non-Compliance Information

- (1) The registered provider did not ensure that an adequate number of adults were working directly with the children attending the service.
- (3) On the day of inspection at 09:40am there were 2 adults providing care and education to 25 children ranging in age from 3 to 6 years. At 10:35am one child went home leaving 2 adults with 24 children for the remainder of the session.
- For a sessional service the correct adult to child ratio is 1 adult to every 11 children.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

- (1)&(3)A morning and afternoon session will be in operation from September 2024 to accommodate the additional children.
- The registered provider will ensure that no more than 22 children are accommodated in the service on any one day.

Summary Comment

The inspectors have reviewed the response of the registered provider and accepts that the correct ratios will be maintained.

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 following observations were made on how each child's learning, development and well-being was facilitated within the daily life in the service:

Basic needs:

- Children moved about the room freely engaging in tabletop activities, free play and imaginary role play. The children fed and cared for the resident tortoise who lived in a tray in the care room.
- The service embraced outdoor play and learning with the children playing games in the outdoor space.
- Staff members were observed encouraging the children to become independent and self-caring, suitable to their age and stage of development which included using the toilet, hand washing, caring for their belongings and tidying away after activities and play.
- The children brought their own healthy snack from home which they had at 11am. During this period the staff members provided assistance as required whilst encouraging conversation and extending interactions. The registered provider also provided treats as it was the end of the year party.

Supporting relationships around children:

- It was observed that the adults were actively involved in children's play, followed the children's lead, and responded to children's social bids by engaging in conversations and laughter. The children sought out the staff members for help and support.

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.
- (2) A registered provider-
- (a) of a full day care service, a part-time day care service, a sessional preschool service or a childminding service that is registered for the first time on or after 30 June 2016, or shall ensure that a suitable, safe and secure outdoor space to which the preschool children attending the service have access on a daily basis is provided on the premises.

Compliance Information

- (1)(b) Mats and soft cushions were available for children to take a break from activities and rest if needed.
- (2)(a) The outdoor space had a soft tile surface and was enclosed by fencing with a secure gate.

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 care room had areas of interest with supporting equipment which incorporated natural/sensorial materials, art and crafts and a range of suitable toys. Tables and chairs in the room were appropriate to the age and stage of development of pre-school children attending the care room.

Equipment in the outdoor area included a partially sheltered area, wooden activity unit with a slide and climbing ladder, large slide and ride on toys.

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 and the outdoor space were secured. These safety measures ensured that a child did not exit unsupervised and restricted unauthorised persons from gaining access to the service.
- All cleaning agents were stored out of reach of the children.
- The emergency exit doors were unobstructed.
- All furniture and display units had a stable base with no risk of toppling identified.

Infection Control:

The following infection control measures were observed:

- The hand washing policy was implemented in practice with appropriate hand washing for staff and children at all times. Warm running water was available in the children's sanitary area, along with a supply of liquid soap and hand paper towel for effective hand washing.
- Pedal bins were in use throughout the service.
- The service was clean with cleaning schedules available.
- A fridge was available in the care room for the refrigeration of perishable items in the children's lunch boxes.

Non-Compliance Information

Infection Control:

1. Children's lunches which contained perishable items were not stored in the fridge to prevent the growth of food poisoning bacteria.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

Infection Control:

1. From September all children lunches will be placed in a fridge. The registered provider will ensure that the children's lunches are refrigerated on a daily basis.

Summary Comment

The inspector has accepted the assurances of the registered provider who has stated that childrens lunches will be refrigerated when the new term starts in September. This will be reviewed at the next inspection.

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 a person had up to date First Aid Responders course and was available onsite 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) A written record was available of the fire drills completed in the service. A fire drill took place on the day of inspection 11/06/24.
- (b) A record was maintained of the number, type and maintenance record of the fire fighting equipment and mains powered smoke alarms on the premises. The fighting equipment was last serviced on the 14/08/2023. The mains powered smoke alarms were last serviced on the 10/10/2023.
- (4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire was conspicuously displayed in the care room.

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 22 children at any one time attending the service. The policy showed that the service was insured from 28/03/2024 to the 27/03/2025.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-
(e) equipped with adequate and suitable sanitary facilities.

Non-Compliance Information

(e) On the morning of the inspection there were insufficient sanitary accommodation available for the number of children present. There were 25 children with only 2 toilet cubicles and 2 sinks available in the sanitary facilities. One toilet and 1 sink must be available to every 11 children.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

(e) From September 2024 there will only be 22 children present at each session.

Summary Comment

It is accepted that the registered provider will have addressed the non-compliance by reducing numbers when the service reopens in September. The registered provider in the Corrective Action and Preventive Action plan has addressed the non-compliance.