

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

<b>TUSLA Identifier:</b>	TU2015MH174
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<b>Name of Service:</b>	Small Steps
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<b>Address of Service:</b>	8 The Park, Lutterell Hall, Dunboyne, Co. Meath
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<b>Eircode:</b>	A86 CD37
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<b>Name of Registered Provider:</b>	Miriam Grant
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<b>Service type:</b>	Sessional
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<b>Date of Inspection:</b>	31/01/2025
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<b>No of pre-school children:</b>	AM	6	PM	No.
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<b>Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:</b>	The Brunel Building, Heuston South Quarter, St John's Road West, Dublin 8.
<b>Inspection undertaken by:</b>	S Early O'Brien & D Duffy
<b>Title:</b>	Early Years Inspector & Inspection & Registration Manager

### 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).

<b>Conditions if applicable</b>	Not Applicable.
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### Description of service

Little Steps provides a sessional service to children from 2 years 8 months to 6 years and participates in the Early Childhood Care and Education Programme (ECCE). The service operates from 09:30 to 12:30 hours and is registered to cater for a maximum of 11 children at any one time. The service is situated to the rear of the registered providers home and consists of 1 care room with sanitary facilities. A partially sheltered and an open outdoor space is located adjacent to the care room.

### Staffing

The registered provider is the sole operator of the service and works directly with the children. There is an adult available to provide emergency cover if required. The adult working in the service has completed a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 6 on the National Framework of Qualifications.

### 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 the following regulations

Regulation 9 (1)(2)(4) Management and Recruitment

Regulation 11 (1)(3)(8)(c) Staffing Levels

Regulation 19 (1)(a) Health, Welfare and Development of Child

Regulation 23 Safeguarding Health, Safety and Welfare of Child

Regulation 25 (1)(2) First Aid

Regulation 26 (1)(4) Fire Safety Measures

Regulation 28 Insurance

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 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 registered provider was the person in charge.

(b) The registered provider (person in charge) was present for the duration of the inspection.

(2)(a)(b) Four written and verified references were available in respect of the registered provider and the emergency contact person whose records were reviewed.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures were available on file for the registered provider and emergency contact person. The service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to re-new Garda vetting every 3 years in all cases.

(d) Police vetting disclosures were not required as there was no evidence that any staff member had lived outside of the state for a period of longer than six months.

(4) One adult working directly with the children attending the service held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education as required4.

### 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.*

*(8) Without prejudice to paragraphs (2) to (7)-*

*(c) a registered provider of a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that, where the person in charge operates the service single-handedly, a second person familiar with the operation of the service and in a position to provide assistance to the person in charge in operating the service is, at all times, within close distance of the service and available to attend the service to assist the person in charge in the event of an emergency.*

#### Compliance Information

(1) On the day of inspection, it was observed that there was adequate staffing levels to respond to the needs of the children present.

(3) On the morning of inspection, there were 6 children attending the service being cared for by one adult.

(8) (c) The registered provider ensured that a second person familiar with the operation of the service and in a position to provide assistance to the person in charge operating the service was at all times within close distance of the service and available to attend the service to assist the person in charge in the event of an emergency.

### 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**

Heathy eating is promoted in the service and children bring their own lunch from home for morning snack time in the ECCE session. Water was available to the children from their own bottles which they had access to on a low shelf.

On the day of inspection, children were observed to take their lunchbox from the fridge at snack time and were encouraged to open and close lunch boxes and bottles and be responsible for their own belongings. Snack time was a social experience during which time the staff member sat at the table with the children engaging in social conversations with them. Using gentle tones this promoted a relaxed atmosphere.

Children are encouraged to use the toilet and engage in handwashing independently with assistance provided where needed. They are also encouraged to change from outdoor shoes to indoor shoes independently.

The adult working with the children was sensitive and responsive to the needs of all children.

##### **Supporting Relationships**

As the children were cared for by the same adult, this enabled them to form secure relationships, attachments and develop their confidence and autonomy within the service.

The children appeared happy and content and were engaged and relaxed within the care room and in the outdoor play area. The staff member ensured that the children were supported in all aspects of their physical, emotional and social wellbeing and demonstrated warmth, kindness, affection and respect in all interactions with the children. The staff member was heard encouraging children to be mindful of the feelings of those around them which promoted an ethos of friendship and teamwork.

### **Physical and Material Environment**

The indoor environment was laid out in such a way that children had easy access to resources and interest areas within the room such as a dolls house, a dress-up area, a play kitchen, a library area with a couch, an arts and crafts and mark making station and a construction area.

A family tree containing photos of each child’s family was displayed on the wall at their level in the cosy area of the room.

On the day of inspection children were invited to engage in a craft and gluing activity relating to their current theme on “Road Safety” presented to them on a low table and which was adequately resourced.

The children enjoy time in the outdoor play area daily and the equipment and materials available provided appropriate learning opportunities for the children based on their age and stage of development. This area was adequately supervised, safe and secure on the day of inspection with the children adequately dressed in warm jackets, hats and gloves. They were observed to have autonomy in leading their play choices without the direction of the staff member. In this area children have access to climbing frames, a slide, scooters, tricycles, bicycles, a mud kitchen, and an art station.

### **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 door leading into the service was appropriately secured with a buzzer system to prevent children from exiting unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the premises.

The kitchen and storage facilities for hazardous cleaning materials were inaccessible to children.

Accident and incident reports reviewed were maintained in line with the service policy.

#### **Infection Control:**

Liquid soap, and paper towels were available to facilitate hygienic handwashing for both staff and children.

Lunch boxes that included perishable food items were stored in the fridges in the kitchen in line with safe food guidance.

#### **Administration of Medication:**

There was written evidence of prior parental consent for the administration of anti-febrile medication and prescribed medication and there were procedures in place to safely administer and document such medication if required, including in the case of an emergency.

### Fire Safety:

On the day of inspection, all emergency exits were observed to be clearly identifiable and were not obstructed.

### Non-Compliance Information

### Infection Control:

Handwashing for staff and children was not observed on return indoors from outdoor play. This posed a risk of cross contamination and the spread of infection.

### Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

#### Corrective & Preventive Action

### Infection Control:

I have put up photos on the door at the children's eye level to remind them to wash hands when we come back into the classroom. I have also put up a photo where the children put on their indoor shoes to remind them to wash also. In addition we sing our handwashing song when we are coming back inside from the garden.

#### Supporting documentation submitted

### Infection Control:

Photographic evidence has been submitted in the CAPA response of the handwashing photo reminder on the entrance door from the back garden and the station where children change from outdoor shoes to indoor ones.

### Summary Comment

The information submitted meets regulatory requirement

## 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) A staff member held the appropriate First Aid Responder (FAR) certification, ensuring that a person trained in first aid was immediately available to the children at all times.

(2) (a)(b) There was a suitably equipped first aid box stored in an easily accessible position available for use

## 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 were available demonstrating that fire drills take place monthly. The last recorded fire drill was documented as having been carried out on 6 January 2025.

(b)

A record was maintained of when the fire detection system and smoke alarms were last serviced on 19 January 2024.

Firefighting equipment records were available demonstrating that these were last serviced on 14 February 2024.

(4)

Fire evacuation procedures were displayed in conspicuous places throughout the service.

## Part VI - Safety

### Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

#### Compliance Information

The registered provider had a valid certificate of insurance for a sessional service for 11 children.