

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

<b>TUSLA Identifier:</b>	TU2015MO040			
<b>Name of Service:</b>	Laura Reapy Ltd T/A First Steps Crèche			
<b>Address of Service:</b>	Units 35/36 An Lantan, Castlebar Road, Ballinrobe, Co. Mayo			
<b>Eircode:</b>	F31 RK25			
<b>Name of Registered Provider:</b>	Laura Reapy			
<b>Service type:</b>	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional			
<b>Date of Inspection:</b>	01/04/2025			
<b>No of pre-school children:</b>	AM	42	PM	32
<b>Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:</b>	Early Year's Inspectorate, TUSLA, Child and Family Agency, 2nd Floor, St. Mary's HQ., Castlebar, Co. Mayo.			
<b>Inspection undertaken by:</b>	B Lavin & F Nic Dhonnacha			
<b>Title:</b>	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).

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

Laura Reapy Ltd T/A First Steps Crèche is registered to provide full day care, part-time and sessional services to preschool children and is located in Ballinrobe, county Mayo. The service is registered to cater for children aged from two to six years of age between 7:30 hours to 18:00 hours. The premises is a purpose built, detached, two storey building with four playrooms on the ground floor, a kitchen, sanitary facilities and an office. The children have access to enclosed outdoor play areas located to the rear and sides of the premises. The service is registered to provide school aged services.

### Staffing

There were 15 staff working in the service including the registered provider, manager, childcare staff and a cook.

### 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 and safety. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

On inspection additional non-compliance which posed a risk was identified under Regulation 23. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations 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.

### Acknowledgments

The inspectors wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, 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 registered provider was the designated person in charge and there was a manager in charge who was available to deputise in the service.

(b) The manager was on the premises when the early years inspectors arrived and remained on site for the duration of the inspection. The registered provider arrived approx. 10.10 am and remained onsite for the duration of the inspection.

On the day of inspection, 15 staff files were reviewed which included the registered provider, manager, two cooks, a cleaner (auxiliary) and 10 staff who provide direct care for the children.

(2)(a) Twenty-five of the required 30 written validated references on file, in respect of the 15 adults were from a past employer.

(b) Five of the required 30 written validated references on file, in respect of the 15 adults were from a reputable source, other than a past employer.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all 15 staff. 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) Documentary evidence indicated that 5 of 8 adults, who had lived outside the jurisdiction, for longer than 6 consecutive months, while over the age of 18 years, had the required police vetting.

(4) Twelve staff working directly with the children had evidence of Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) Level 5 to Level 8, in Early Childhood Care and Education.

### Non-Compliance Information

(d)

1. Three of 8 adults had worked outside the jurisdiction, for longer than 6 consecutive months or more, while over the age of 18 years but did not have the required Police vetting. It was acknowledged that the registered provider had made efforts to assist in obtaining one Police vetting for one adult working in the service but there was no Police vetting disclosure.

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

#### Corrective and Preventive Action

In relation to one staff member their curriculum vitae did not accurately reflect their time spent outside of the jurisdiction. When amended they no longer required the Police vetting. Applications have been made for the required police vetting for the remaining two staff members.

#### Supporting documentation submitted

Documents have been submitted to the Inspectorate in relation to the Police vetting applications and the updated curriculum vitae.

#### Summary Comment

The regulatory non-compliance found on inspection for one staff member had been addressed by the actions taken and evidence submitted to the Inspectorate by the service. The regulatory non-compliance found on inspection for two staff members remains outstanding and will be examined at the next inspection.

### 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 the inspection the registered provider ensured that an adequate number of staff were working directly with the children.

(2)

- In the toddler room there were 4 children present aged between 2-3 years and 1 staff member.

- In the preschool room 2 year 1 there were 10 children present aged 4 years old and 2 staff members.
- In the preschool room 3 year 1 there were 10 children present aged 3 – 4 years and 2 staff members.
- In the preschool room 1 year 2 there were 18 children present aged 4-5 years and 3 staff members.

(8)(a) Documentary evidence of a staff roster indicated that at least two adults were on the premises when the pre-school was operating.

### 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

- The service promoted healthy eating and food and snacks were provided at regular intervals during the day. The children in the morning had a snack provided for by their parents/guardians. This consisted of fruit, yogurts, sandwiches, crackers, cheese and water to drink. The children attending the service on a full time and part time basis had their meals provided by the service. There was a three-week menu plan in place. The menu on the day of inspection was dinner which consisted of beef stew with mashed potatoes, pasta and vegetables was served at approximately 12.30pm. The afternoon snack was homemade scones and fruit. Young children had the opportunity to feed themselves appropriate to the age and stage of development. Children's drinks were available on a low shelf in the care rooms within their reach.
- Nappy changing in the toddler room was carried out regularly and promptly when required and handled in a positive and sensitive manner. Staff members were observed speaking to children during this time and using it as an opportunity for warm one to one interaction.
- Bibs and aprons were available to children for messy play activities.
- The individual sleep needs of younger children were met, and this was observed on the day by children sleeping at various intervals. Older preschool children were facilitated with a scheduled rest period in the afternoon. For children who did not require a sleep, appropriate rest facilities were available in the care rooms and children were observed spending time in this area for short periods of rest throughout the day.

- Children in the toddler room were observed to be free to lie, roll, creep, crawl, pull themselves up and learn to walk in a safe space.
- Children in the older care rooms had easy access to the outside area throughout the day and children moved freely between both indoors and outdoors.
- The adults working with the children were sensitive and responsive in promoting positive behaviours and supported children to find positive solutions.

### Supporting relationships

- The staff members demonstrated warmth and sensitivity in their interactions with the children. The inspector observed a child receiving comfort in the toddler room when they woke from their nap. The staff member offered reassurance and communicated using soft gentle tones.
- In the preschool room's 1, 2 and 3 the room staff supported children to engage positively with one another, and the children were encouraged to engage in play activities that required turn taking and sharing. Staff members were heard encouraging children to be mindful of the feelings of those around them which promoted an ethos of friendship and working together.
- Staff and parents worked in partnership within the service. The use of a child's profile form gave staff members valuable information about the child's likes, dislikes, daily routine, interests and family.
- Staff demonstrated familiarity with the children and were interested in their family occasions.
- The children participated in a group imaginative game of playing car wash. The staff members participated fully in this engaging play and helped extend the play to include more children.
- Photo routines and daily jobs lists and helpers decorated the care room walls. These activities were observed to be enjoyed by the children and encouraged a sense of responsibility in the children.
- Photos and activities were displayed on the walls in the corridors for the parents to view. These allowed parents to know about upcoming activities and curriculum plans for the month.

## 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.*

#### Non-Compliance Information

##### General Safety:

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

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

##### Corrective and Preventive Action

A Garda vetting application was submitted and received. The registered provider will ensure all Garda vetting's are renewed and staff files are checked regularly.

##### Supporting documentation submitted

Documentation submitted to the Inspectorate.

#### Summary Comment

The regulatory non-compliance found on inspection has been addressed by the actions taken and evidence submitted to the Inspectorate by the service.

## 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 seven staff members were trained in First Aid Responder for Children (FAR). Two staff had first aid training with a paediatric content. All staff were available to the children attending the pre-school service.

(2)(a)

There was a first aid box that was safely stored, easily accessible and in a conspicuous position in the staff room adjacent to the kitchen and extra supplies were available in each playroom.

(b)

The service demonstrated that the first aid bag was fully equipped and available to the children attending the pre-school service and items were within date.

## 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 record in writing was kept and maintained in the service of the monthly fire drills. The last monthly fire drill was dated 11/3/2025.

(b)

A record was maintained of the number, type, and maintenance of firefighting equipment with the last annual service dated 5/03/2025.

The annual maintenance for the services smoke and fire detection system was dated 17/02/2025.

(3)

A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire was conspicuously displayed in the pre-school rooms.

## Part VI - Safety

### Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

#### Compliance Information

Adequate insurance was available for 66 preschool children in a full day care with an expiry date 27/03/2026.