

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

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| <b>TUSLA Identifier:</b> | TU2015MO040 |
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| <b>Name of Service:</b> | Laura Reapy Ltd T/A First Steps Crèche |
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| <b>Address of Service:</b> | Units 35/36 An Lantan, Castlebar Road, Ballinrobe, Co. Mayo |
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| <b>Eircode:</b> | F31 RK25 |
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| <b>Name of Registered Provider:</b> | Laura Reapy |
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| <b>Service type:</b> | Full Day, Part Time, Sessional |
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| <b>Date of Inspection:</b> | 06/05/2026 |
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|-----------------------------------|----|----|----|----|
| <b>No of pre-school children:</b> | AM | 31 | PM | 28 |
|-----------------------------------|----|----|----|----|

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|-------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:</b> | Early Years Inspectorate, Quality and Regulation Directorate, Child and Family Agency. 2 <sup>nd</sup> Floor St Mary's HQ, Castlebar, Co Mayo. F23HP58 |
| <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).

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### Description of service

Laura Reapy Ltd trading as First Steps Crèche is in a residential estate on the outskirts of Ballinrobe in Co Mayo. It is registered to provide full day care, part-time and sessional services to preschool children. The service is registered to cater for children aged from 0-6 years it is currently accommodating children from 2-6 years between 08.00 and 17.30. The premises is a purpose built, detached, two storey building with four playrooms on the ground floor, a kitchen, sanitary facilities and an office. Three of the four playrooms were in operation on the day of inspection. The fourth playroom is now a designated sleep area with a partition area for storage. The children have access to enclosed outdoor play areas and sheltered all weather areas located to the rear and sides of the premises. The service is registered to provide an afterschool programme for school age children.

### Staffing

The total number of staff employed in the service is 11. The registered provider is onsite daily, with two named deputies who work in the playrooms, five preschool educators, two cooks and an auxiliary member of staff. All eight staff working directly with the preschool children have evidence of childcare qualifications on file.

### 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.

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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.

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### 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.*

*(3) The procedures specified in paragraph (2) shall be carried out prior to any person being appointed, assigned or allowed access to or contact with a child attending the pre-school service.*

*(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 two named persons available to deputise in the service.

(b) One of the deputy persons in charge was available when the inspectors arrived and the registered provider arrived a few minutes later at approximately 10.15 and remained on site for the duration of the inspection.

On the day of inspection, 11 staff files were reviewed which included the registered provider, 2 deputy persons in charge, 2 cooks, an auxiliary staff member and 5 adults who work directly with the preschool children and school age after school programme.

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Upon review of available evidence and an interview with the person in charge it was determined that no new staff members had been employed since the previous inspection on the 1/4/2025. It was therefore not necessary to review any employment records, so Regulations 9(2) (a) and (b) were not applicable.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all 11 adults whose disclosures were identified as due for renewal. The service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew garda vetting every three years.

(d) Documentary evidence indicated that 4 staff, who had lived outside the jurisdiction, for longer than 6 consecutive months, while over the age of 18 years, had the required police vetting.

(3) The procedures specified in paragraph (2) were carried out prior to any person being appointed, assigned or allowed access to or contact with a child attending the pre-school service.

(4) Eight 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.

### 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) An adequate number of adults were working with the children attending the preschool service.  
There were five adults working directly with children on the day of inspection.
- (2) The minimum adult to child ratios were provided on the morning of inspection in accordance with the required ratios considering the ages of the children and the length of time each child spent in the service as outlined below:
  - Preschool 1: Two adults cared for 15 children aged between 3 and 4 years of age.

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- Sessional preschool 1: One adult cared for 8 children aged between 3 and 4 years of age.
- Preschool 2: Two adults cared for 8 children aged between 4 and 5 years of age.

Three additional staff members (including the registered provider) provided relief cover for breaks and nappy changes. The cook was preparing, cooking, serving and storing the meals and snacks for the children. The registered provider and one deputy person assisted with the administration aspects of the inspection.

(8) There were at least two adults present in the service during the operation hours of the service.

### 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

##### (1)(a)

- Drinking water was available on low tables in each playroom to all children throughout the day.
- Nutritious healthy meals were served at regular times with flexibility given for children who were sleeping.
- Care and attention were taken during mealtimes to eat at the child's pace and staff encouraged and supported children to feed themselves independently according to their age and stage of development.
- Children sat at tables and chairs which were appropriate for their height and/or stage of development.
- The staff were observed sitting at the child's level and chatted in a respectful manner during meal and snack times.
- The privacy and dignity of each child was respected during toileting practices.
- Staff responded to each child's individual needs and children's nappies were changed in a timely manner.
- Appropriate rest facilities were available in the care rooms and children were observed spending time in these areas for short periods of rest throughout the day.
- The children's nap and sleep times were tailored to each child's individual needs.

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- The children had easy access to the outside areas throughout the day. Children moved freely between indoors and outdoors. The children spent considerable time outdoors in the well-equipped outdoor play areas on the day of inspection.

### 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:

- A bell system was in place on an internal entrance door to the service to control admission of people to the service. This door was secured during the inspection to prevent children from leaving unsupervised.
- Access to the kitchen was secured from children with safety gates.
- The outdoor areas were secured with fencing and gates to protect the children within.
- Medication and cleaning agents were stored in a secured area out of reach of the children.
- The blind cords were appropriately secured to the windows throughout the service.
- Visibility strips were installed on glass doors and windows for safety precautions and to prevent injury to children and staff.

##### Infection Control:

- Children were observed washing their hands after painting activities and before mealtimes.
- Warm water was available in all hand-washing basins with temperatures ranging from 32.2°C to 38.6°C.
- Paper towel, soap and lidded bins were available at the hand basins and sanitary areas in the service.
- The service was maintained in a clean condition.

##### Administration of Medication:

- No medication was observed to be administered to a child by staff on the day of inspection. Temperature reducing medication was available. It was safely stored and in date. In conversation staff were able to detail the procedures for administering medication to children.

##### Safe Sleep:

- Stackable beds were available for the children over two years of age who required a nap.
- Regular sleep checks were carried out on the children and records were maintained.

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### Fire Safety:

- Fire doors were unobstructed throughout the service.
- Clear signage was available to highlight the exits.