

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

<b>TUSLA Identifier:</b>	TU2015MO109
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<b>Name of Service:</b>	Stepping Stones Playgroup
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<b>Address of Service:</b>	Curam Family Centre, Dalton Street, Claremorris, Co. Mayo
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<b>Eircode:</b>	F12 F6C5
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<b>Name of Registered Provider:</b>	Tracey Cannon
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<b>Service type:</b>	Sessional
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<b>Date(s) of Inspection:</b>	15/10/2024
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<b>No of pre-school children:</b>	AM	13	PM	N/A
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<b>Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:</b>	Early Year's Inspectorate TUSLA, Child and Family Agency 2 <sup>nd</sup> Floor, St Mary's HQ Castlebar, Co Mayo		
<b>Inspection undertaken by:</b>	B Lavin	Y Coyne	
<b>Title:</b>	Early Years Inspector	Inspection and 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

Stepping Stone Playgroup is a privately operated sessional service, located in Claremorris town in County Mayo. The service is registered to cater for 18 children aged from two to six years of age between the hours of 09:15 – 12:15 Monday to Friday. The premises is situated in a designated area of a family resource centre and has one playroom and sanitary facilities. An enclosed outdoor area dedicated for use by the children is located to the rear and side of the premises and is directly accessible from the playroom.

### Staffing

There are three staff working in the service including the registered provider.

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

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9, 11, 19, 23, 25, 26 and 29, however, on inspection an additional non-compliance which posed a risk was identified under Regulation 16. 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 provide, 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 named person who was able to deputise as required.

(b) During the period of inspection, the registered provider was on the premises and remained onsite for the duration of the inspection.

Following a review of the service files and discussion with the registered provider, it was confirmed that there were four members of staff employed in the service. These files along with two students on placement were reviewed on the day of inspection.

(2)(a) There were six written and appropriately validated references available from their most recent employer for the four adults and two students working in the service.

(b) There was two written and appropriately validated reference available from a source other than the previous last employer for one adult working in the service

(c) Garda Vetting disclosures were available for the staff working in the service.

(d) Police Vetting disclosure was available for two adults working in the service as they had lived outside the jurisdiction for a period of over 6 months.

(4) Three adults working directly with the children held Early Childhood Care and Education qualifications ranging from Level 6 to level 8 on the National Framework of Qualifications or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

### Non-Compliance Information

(2)(a)(b)

- One written validation was not available in respect of one adult working in the service.
- It was noted on the day of inspection that one reference presented for one staff was not accepted as it did not include the date.
- Three written references in respect of the two students working in the service were not available.

This was a non-compliance on the previous inspection.

(4) No evidence was provided of one staff members qualification.

## Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

### Corrective and Preventive Action

(2)(a)(b) The service advised in a written response that:

- A written validation was provided for one adult working in the service.
- The reference on file was dated and signed.
- Three written references were provided for the two students working in the service.

(4) A level 5 award in Early Childhood Care and Education for the staff member was provided.

### Supporting documentation submitted

Copies of references and qualification certificate documents.

## 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 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.*

#### Compliance Information

- (1) During the period of inspection there were adequate numbers of adults working with the pre-school children attending the service.
- (3) The registered provider ensured that the minimum ratio of adults to children specified was maintained. There were 13 children present on a sessional basis aged between two years six months to four years old with three staff members caring for the children.

### Part IV – Information and Records

#### Regulation 16 – Record in relation to pre-school service

- (1) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of the following information in relation to the service:*
- (a) the name, position, qualifications and experience of the person in charge and of every other employee, unpaid worker and contractor;*

#### Non-Compliance Information

- (1)(a) A record of identification was not available for one staff member and two students working in the service.

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

##### Corrective and Preventive Action

- (1)(a) Records of identification were provided for one staff member and two students working in the service.

##### Supporting documentation submitted

Photo documents were provided.

### 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 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*

*(1) A registered provider shall, in providing a pre-school service, ensure that-*

*(b) appropriate and suitable care practices are in place in the pre-school service, having regard to the number of children attending the service and the nature of their needs.*

### Compliance Information

#### Basic needs

- During the inspection the children ate a snack which consisted of fruit, yogurt, ham, sandwiches and cheese provided from home, seated at low tables and chairs and supervised by the adults who gave assistance where it was needed and encouraged conversation with the children during mealtime.
- The children used the two toilets available with assistance given to those who needed it. Hand washing was facilitated in the two basins in the sanitary accommodation. There was a supply of warm and cold water, liquid hand soap and hand towels.
- The children enjoyed freedom of movement in the preschool room and outdoor area. They were able to explore several different interest areas while outdoors.
- In the playroom, the children had the opportunity to rest or relax with soft seating in the form of a child size couch in a designated cosy area.

#### Supporting relationships around children

- The adults were observed to be interested in the children, spoke in low tones, listened to them and responded to their requests. The adults interacted in a positive way with the children by sitting at their

level, maintaining good eye contact, showing empathy and a good understanding of each child. The adults were observed to be caring and supportive in their interactions with the children.

- Adults were observed helping children to find solutions, supporting them and talking to children in a variety of ways, discussing, questioning, modelling and commentating, extending a child's activities and initiating games and activities.

### Physical and material environment

The environment supported each child's learning, development, and wellbeing as -

- The playroom was equipped with open shelving units where children could access play equipment and materials independently. There was a variety of play equipment and materials appropriate to the children's age and stage of development.
- The playroom had various interest areas, farm, house, art, train, shop, reading, sensory, Montessori, puppets and dress up. The various interest areas supported learning across all areas of development, fine motor skills, language development, cognitive development, sensory and imaginative development.
- There was plenty of clear floor space to enable the children to move around unhindered and appropriate furnishings of low-level tables and chairs were available to facilitate mealtimes and table-top activities.
- The walls of the playroom were decorated with posters, family photos, children's art work, learning materials in picture style and the daily routine for the children while in the service.
- There were enclosed outdoor play areas which catered for different interests at the same time. One of the areas had all weather surface and a covered roof area to allow all weather play. Outdoor play equipment included an outdoor kitchen and sand table for sensory and imaginative play, a playhouse for imaginative play, seesaw for gross motor play, a slide for gross motor play and hula hoops for interactive and gross motor play.

### Non-Compliance Information

#### Basic needs

- (1) (a) The healthy eating policy was not implemented on the day of inspection. Children were observed to eat biscuits, chocolate spread sandwiches and sugary drinks during their snack. This was a non compliance on the previous inspection. It is acknowledged that the registered provider has shared the healthy eating policy in place in the service with the parents.

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

#### Corrective and Preventive Action

(1)(a) A reminder text message and email were issued to all parents with details of the service healthy eating policy and examples of healthy snacks provided. Unhealthy food items will be returned home.

#### Supporting documentation submitted

Email documentation provided.

#### 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 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 gate was secured on arrival to the service.
- Documented and recorded daily records of attendance were observed to be kept for all of children attending the service.
- The fire door in the building were unobstructed.
- The outdoor area was secured.

##### **Infection Control:**

- Foot operated pedal bins were available throughout the service and observed to be used appropriately by the children and adults when disposing of items such as paper towel following hand washing.
- Hand hygiene was observed to be practiced frequently by the adult and the children for example after outdoor play, toileting and before snack time.
- The preschool room and sanitary areas were clean and well maintained.
- The sanitary facilities were equipped with warm water, liquid soap, hand paper towels and lidded and pedal operated bins. Child friendly handwashing posters were located above the wash hand basins as prompters to promote good handwashing practices.

### Administration of Medication:

Medications were not administered in the service on the day of inspection.

### Fire Safety:

- A notice of the procedure to be followed in the event of fire was displayed on the wall in the service.
- Monthly fire drills were carried out in the service.

### Non-Compliance Information

1. Whole grapes were present in a child's lunchbox. Whole grapes pose a choking risk to young children.
2. Staff bags and personal belongings were accessible to the preschool children in the sanitary accommodation. This posed a safety risk to the preschool children.
3. The couch in the playroom rest area was frayed and torn. This posed an infection control risk to the children.
4. Antihistamine medicine was accessible to children in the fridge storing the children's lunches within the playroom. The fridge was situated beside the children's table and did not have a child lock on it. This posed a safety risk to the preschool children.
5. Storage of the cleaning agents in the sanitary accommodation were on a low level and the cupboard was not secure and accessible to children. This was non-compliant on last inspection.

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

#### Corrective and Preventive Action

1. Close monitoring of children's lunch boxes and reminder sent to parents to cut grapes into small pieces.
2. Staff bags and personal belongings have been moved to a high shelf out of reach of children.
3. The couch has been repaired and re stitched. A review of the condition of furniture will take place regularly.
4. The antihistamine medicine has been removed and a child safety lock fitted to the fridge.
5. The cleaning agents have been removed from the cupboard and a child safety lock fitted to the cupboard.

#### Supporting documentation submitted

Photo and documentary evidence provided.

#### 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 registered provider ensured that a person appropriately trained in first aid was available within the service. There were two staff members suitably trained in first aid.

(a) The first aid box was stored in an accessible manner on a high shelf in the premises.

(b) The first aid box was available to the children attending the pre-school service at all times.

#### Non-Compliance Information

(2) The first aid box did not contain the appropriate first aid supplies. Two individually wrapped triangular bandages were not in date on the day of inspection. A water based burns dressing in size small and large were not present in the first aid box.

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

##### Corrective and Preventive Action

(2) The water-based burns dressings were replaced in the first aid box. A regular review of the first aid box will take place.

##### Supporting documentation submitted

Photo evidence was provided.

#### 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 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.
- (2) The record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection by-
- (a) a parent or guardian of a pre-school child attending or proposing to attend the pre-school service,
  - (b) an employee, and
  - (c) an authorised person.
- (3) A registered provider shall ensure that a record referred to in paragraph (2) is retained for a period of 5 years after its creation
- (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 monthly fire drills that took place in the service. The last recorded fire drill took place on the 27/09/2024.
- (b) Maintenance records of all the fire fighting equipment and smoke alarms were available in the service. A record for the fire fighting equipment advised that the last service was 15/02/2024 and smoke alarm advised that the last service was 12/01/2024.
- (4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of fire was displayed on the wall in the service.

### 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.

#### Compliance Information

The preschool had two toilets and two wash hand basins available for the maximum eighteen children registered to attend the service on a daily basis.