

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

<b>TUSLA Identifier:</b>	TU2015MO110
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<b>Name of Service:</b>	Stepping Stones Montessori
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<b>Address of Service:</b>	Main Street, Newport, Co. Mayo
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<b>Eircode:</b>	F28 E6H7
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<b>Name of Registered Provider:</b>	Catherine Sheridan
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<b>Service type:</b>	Part Time, Sessional
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<b>Date of Inspection:</b>	20/03/2025
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<b>No of pre-school children:</b>	AM	43	PM	20
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<b>Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:</b>	Early Years Inspectorate, TUSLA, Child and Family Agency, 2nd Floor, St. Mary's HQ., Castlebar, Co Mayo.
<b>Inspection undertaken by:</b>	M Farrell
<b>Title:</b>	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).

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

Stepping Stones Montessori is a privately owned and operated parttime and sessional service located in Newport, Co Mayo. The service is registered to provide services to children aged from 2-6 years between 9:00 and 14:00hours. The service is registered to provide school aged childcare. The premises is in a converted commercial building and has two care rooms, one located on the first floor and a second on the ground floor, an office and sanitary facilities. An outdoor play area is located to the rear and side of the premises.

### Staffing

There are ten staff in the service including the registered provider who works directly with the children, childcare staff and administrative staff.

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

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9, 11, 15, 22, 23, 25, 26 and 27. 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 inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, 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.*

*(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 were two named adults to deputise in the service.
- (b) The designated person in charge was present in the service during the unannounced inspection.
- (2) There were 10 staff adults working in the service at the time of the inspection. The following vetting documentation had been obtained for the adults:
- (a) Two written validated references from previous employers particularly their most recent employer for eight adults. One written validated reference from their past employer for two adults.
- (b) One written validated reference from sources other than a previous employer for two adults.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all 10 adults. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
- (4) Evidence of the required qualification in Early Childhood Care and Education or equivalent was available on file for 9 adults who worked directly with the children.

### Non-Compliance Information

- (2)
- (d) The required International Child Protection Certificate (ICPC) was not available for one adult who had lived outside of the State for longer than six months as an adult.

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

The registered provider advised in writing that:

#### **Corrective and Preventive Action**

- (d) The International Child Protection Certificate has been obtained for the staff member and a copy is held on their staff file. It will be noted on staff files for future recruitment that any new staff members who have lived outside Ireland for 6 months or more must hold a copy of their International Child Protection Certificate on (ICPC) on file prior to commencement of employment.

#### **Supporting documentation submitted**

Copy of the International Child Protection Certificate (ICPC).

### Summary Comment

The actions taken and evidence submitted by the registered provider has addressed the non-compliance found under Regulation 9 (2)(d) on 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) An adequate number of adults worked directly with the children attending the pre-school service. There were 7 adults working directly with 43 children on the inspector's unannounced arrival to the service on the morning of the inspection. The 4 adults provided direct care to 20 children during the afternoon of the inspection.

(2) Part-time services were provided following the morning session with staff directly caring for children. The minimum required adult to child ratios of 1:8 for children aged between 3 and 6 years of age were maintained during the provision of the part-time service.

(8)  
(a) The was always at least two adults on the premises during the inspection. Discussion with staff found that two adults were present during service opening hours.

### Part IV – Information and Records

#### Regulation 15 – Record of pre-school child

*(1) A registered provider of a pre-school service other than a pre-school service in a drop-in centre or a temporary pre-school service shall ensure that a record in writing is kept in respect of each pre-school child attending the service containing the following particulars:*

- (a) the name and date of birth of the child;*
- (b) the date on which the child first attended the service;*
- (c) the date on which the child ceased to attend the service;*
- (d) the name and address of a parent or guardian of the child and a telephone number where that parent or guardian or a relative or friend of the child can be contacted during the hours of operation of the service;*
- (e) authorisation for the collection of the child;*
- (f) details of any illness, disability, allergy or special need of the child, together with all the information relevant to the provision of special care or attention;*
- (g) the name and telephone number of the child's registered medical practitioner;*
- (h) record of immunisations, if any, received by the child;*
- (i) written parental consent for appropriate medical treatment of the child in the event of an emergency.*

*(3) A record in writing referred to in paragraph (1) or (2) shall be open to inspection on the premises by-*

- (c) an authorised person.*

#### Compliance Information

(1) (a) to (i)

A sample of ten children's records across the children attending both playrooms were selected for review by the inspector. The children's records were found to contain the information required under the regulation.

(3) (c)

The registered provider made the required information readily available to the inspector on request.

### Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

#### Regulation 22 – Food and drink

*A registered provider shall ensure that adequate and suitable, nutritious and varied food and drink is available for each pre-school child attending the pre-school service.*

#### Compliance Information

The children brought food from home to the service to eat in the service. The service had a healthy eating policy in place reflected in the food the children ate including fruit, chopped vegetables, humus, rolls, pasta and yoghurts. The staff were observed to sit with the children to supervise them closely while they were sitting in groups at tables eating their food in the Downstairs playroom in accordance with the service's Healthy Eating policy. The children had access to drinks whenever they felt thirsty.

### 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:

Children from the Downstairs playroom were playing outdoors supervised by staff on the inspector's unannounced arrival to the service. The gates to the outdoor area were secured to prevent children from leaving unnoticed. There was a securing system on the entrance door to the premises allowing staff to control access to the service. Internal doors such as the door to the storage area off the Upstairs playroom were secured to prevent children from accessing the area. The toys and play items were in satisfactory condition and were appropriate for the age and developmental stages of the children playing with them during the inspection. The stairway to the Upstairs playroom was adequately lit and had handrails in place.

##### Infection Control:

Warm water, liquid soap and paper towel was provided in the sanitary units for children and staff to wash and dry their hands. Foot pedal bins were provided for the disposal of waste including used paper hand towels. The staff prompted and supervised the children washing their hands for example before snack time in both playrooms. Refrigerators were available in the playrooms for the safe storage of perishable food items and observed to be used to store the children's snacks provided from home. The service's cleaning schedules were available for

inspection and cleaning checklists were completed by the staff. Aprons and gloves were available in the nappy changing unit for staff to wear when changing nappies.

**Administration of Medication:**

No child was observed to have medicine administered to them whilst in the service. The staff were aware of the safe storage procedures for medication storage.

**Safe Sleep:**

None of the children who were all aged over 2 years slept during the inspection. Stackable beds were available in the service if a child wanted to sleep/rest.

**Fire Safety:**

The emergency exit routes were observed to be free from obstruction during the sessions. Emergency exit route evacuation plans were clearly displayed.

### 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) Certificates of completed First Aid Response (FAR) training were available for inspection for three staff members who were working in the service on the day.
- (2) (a) There were suitably equipped first aid boxes available for children in both playrooms that were stored out of reach of the children.
- (b) The first aid equipment was readily available if a child required first aid treatment in 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.
- (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) Fire drills were conducted monthly in the service with written records of the fire drills kept by the staff. The most recent fire drill record showed that it was undertaken on the 11 March 2025.
  - (b) The service kept a record of the number, type and maintenance record of firefighting equipment and smoke alarm system. Annual maintenance records were available for the firefighting equipment and the smoke alarm system.
- (4) Notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire were conspicuously displayed in the service.

### Part VI - Safety

#### Regulation 27 – Supervision

*A registered provider shall ensure that pre-school children attending the service are supervised at all times.*

#### Compliance Information

The staff were observed to supervise the children primarily by sight throughout the inspection. The children were out of sight when using the toilet but within earshot of the staff if they needed help or assistance. At snack time, the staff were observed to sit with the children to supervise them closely when eating in the Downstairs playroom. The staff were observed to supervise the children from the Upstairs playroom closely when using the stairs to access the outdoor area. One staff member went downstairs at the front of the group of children to supervise them. A second staff member at the top of the stairs supervised the children walking down them and reminded them to use the handrail provided. The staff were observed to move around to keep children in their line of vision when playing outside.