

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015MO111				
Name of Service:	Stepping Stones Pre School (Breaffy)				
Address of Service:	Lisnaran, Breaffy, Castlebar, Co. Mayo				
Eircode:	F23 Y886				
Name of Registered Provider:	Bernadette Frazer				
Service type:	Sessional				
Date of Inspection:	12/02/2025				
No of pre-school children:	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>AM</td> <td>11</td> <td>PM</td> <td>-</td> </tr> </table>	AM	11	PM	-
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, TUSLA, Child and Family Agency, 2nd Floor, St. Mary's HQ., Castlebar, Co. Mayo.				
Inspection undertaken by:	M Farrell				
Title:	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).

Conditions if applicable	Not applicable
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Description of service

Stepping Stones Pre School (Breaffy) is a privately owned and operated service located in a rural area near Breaffy village in County Mayo. The service provides sessional services for children aged from 2-6 years of age between 8:45-11:45 hours. The service is in a detached single storey building beside the registered provider's home and has one playroom and sanitary facilities. There is an enclosed outdoor play area located to the side and front of the premises.

Staffing

There are three staff working in the service including the registered provider who works directly with the children and a staff member that provides relief cover when needed.

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/ safety/ premises and facilities. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under sections of regulations 9, 11, 15, 16, 21, 23, 25 and 28. 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) There was a designated person in charge and a person to deputise in her absence in the service.
 - (b) The designated person in charge and deputy were present in the service throughout the inspection.
- (2) There were three staff members in the service. The following vetting documents were available on file in the service for the three staff:
- (a) Two written references from past employers for two staff and one written reference for a third staff member.
 - (b) One written validated reference from a source other than a past employer for one staff member.
 - (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for the three staff. The service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting for staff members every three years.
- (4)
- There was evidence available on file to show that the three staff members who worked directly with the children held the required qualifications in Early Childhood Care and Education or equivalent qualification.

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) There were two adults working directly with 10 children on the inspector's unannounced arrival to the service. An additional child arrived to the service later in the session.
- (3) The minimum ratio of adults to children attending sessional services for the age range of these children of 1 adult to each 11 children was met with 2 adults caring for the 11 children present.

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 random sample of ten children's records were selected and reviewed by the inspector. The records were found to contain the required details as laid out under the regulation.

(3) (c)

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

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;*
- (b) details of the class of service and the age profile of children for which the service is registered to provide services;*
- (c) details of the adult:child ratios in the service;*
- (d) the type of care or programme provided in the service;*
- (e) the facilities available;*
- (f) the opening hours and fees;*
- (g) the policies, procedures and statements the service is required to maintain in accordance with Regulation 10;*
- (h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis;*
- (i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;*
- (j) details of any medication administered to a pre-school child attending the service with signed parental consent;*
- (k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.*

(3) A record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection on the premises, and the documents and records referred to in paragraph (2)(a) shall be open to inspection whether on the premises or elsewhere, by an authorised person.

Compliance Information

(1) The registered provider kept written records of the following information in the service:

(a) The name, position, qualifications and experience of the staff members was recorded in staff vetting files.

The following information was available in the service's statement of purpose and function and policies:

(b) Information on the service types and ages of children that the service is registered to provide services to.

(c) Details of the adult to child ratios in the service.

(d) Information on the type of care or programme provided in the service.

(e) Details of the facilities available in the service.

(f) Information regarding the service's hours of opening and fees.

(g) The service's policies, procedures and statements as required under Regulation 10 that were kept in a service policy folder.

(h) The staff kept records of details of the attendance of each pre-school child recorded daily in a form.

(i) Details of the staff rostered was recorded on attendance forms.

(j) There was a medication administration record form available for staff to keep details if medication was needed to be given to a child in the service.

(k) The service had an accident and incident record book for the recording of details of accidents and incidents that had occurred in the service. A review of a sample of forms found that the forms had been signed by parents and staff.

(3)
The registered provider made the required information available to the inspector in the service on request.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 21 – Equipment and materials

A registered provider shall ensure that there is adequate and suitable furniture, play and work equipment and materials available on the premises of the pre-school service.

Compliance Information

The indoor play equipment and materials facilitated various types of play and learning including imaginary, sensory, creative, fine motor, language and literacy. The play materials in the playroom were organised and grouped in well resourced, defined interest areas such as a home area, book area, and tabletop activity at the children’s level to encourage children to use them independently. The toys were made from a range of different types of materials such as the wood, plastic and metal play kitchen equipment in the home corner. Toys, equipment, materials and furniture were appropriately maintained, clean and in good condition. There was a cleaning schedule and programme available. The adults regularly checked items for damage and wear and tear and recorded findings on a daily risk-indoor and outdoor checklist.

The outdoor area was well developed with play equipment and materials accessible to the children and of suitable design and size for the children using them during the inspection. There was a wide variety of equipment in the outdoor area to support gross motor development including opportunities for supervised risk taking. For example, a concrete climbing tunnel outdoors was used by the children to jump off supported and supervised closely by a staff member. Other outdoor equipment promoting physical activity included wooden balancing systems, swings and slides. There was storage shed containing smaller items such as hula-hoops, plastic cones and markers for sports drills for the children. A wooden outdoor shelter with child sized seating had a range of toys including a construction bench and kitchen with puzzles and books available for children to choose to play with. Outdoor messy play equipment included a covered sand box and mud kitchen with utensils.

There were adequate numbers of child-sized chairs and tables allowing flexible arrangements for groups of children to play and eat together. Adult size seating was provided for the adults both indoors and outdoors.

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 staff controlled access to and from the service. The main entrance door to the building was secured on the inspector's unannounced arrival to the service. The inspector was admitted to the service by the designated person in charge following review of identification information. The outdoor play area was enclosed preventing children from leaving the area unnoticed. The toys and play equipment were in good condition and suitable for the developmental stages of the children using them. Cleaning products were stored in a storage area off the utility room and were inaccessible to children.

Infection Control:

The service was observed to be clean and well maintained. The staff kept records of cleaning and disinfecting processes carried out in line with the service's cleaning procedures. Children and staff washed and dried their hands at key moments including before eating, after messy play and using the toilet. Warm water and liquid soap were provided at the wash hand basins. Paper towels were used to dry hands and disposed of in the foot pedal operated bins provided in the service. The children's snacks including perishable items such as yoghurts were stored in the service's refrigerator on the children's arrival to the service. The sandbox in the outdoor area was covered when not in use.

Administration of Medication:

The staff informed the inspector that none of the children required to have medication administered to them while in the service. The service had a medication administration policy in place to guide staff should it be needed.

Fire Safety:

The emergency exits and routes were observed to be free from obstruction during the inspection.

Outing:

The service undertook outings from the service with the children. The staff told the inspector that risk assessments were undertaken by the staff prior to undertaking outings. Evidence of the risk assessment for the most recent outing undertaken to a playground offsite was made available for inspection by the registered provider.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 24 - Checking in and out and record of attendance

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that each pre-school child attending the service is checked in and out of the service by an employee or an unpaid worker.

(3) A registered provider shall ensure that-

(a) no person other than-

(i) pre-school child attending the service,

(ii) a person dropping or collecting such a child,

(iii) an employee, or

(iv) an unpaid worker, can enter the premises without his or her entry being approved by an employee, and

(b) a daily record in writing is kept of the entry on the premises of any such person.

Compliance Information

(1) The children were checked in and out of the service by adults who kept written dated records.

(3) (a) The staff admitted the inspector to the service following production of identification details.

(b) The inspector's attendance in the service was recorded on a visitor record form.

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) Two staff members held up to date First Aid Responder (FAR) training certificates. At least one staff member with FAR training was present in the service when children were present and available to provide first aid if needed.

(2) (a) There was a suitably equipped first aid box stored in a conspicuous place in a high labelled cupboard in the playroom. The first aid box had adequate supplies for the number of children attending.

(b) The first aid equipment was readily available if needed for a child.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The service had insurance in place to provide sessional services for a maximum of 22 children at any one time valid until the 27 March 2025.