

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

<b>TUSLA Identifier:</b>	TU2015RN017		
<b>Name of Service:</b>	First Steps Montessori		
<b>Address of Service:</b>	The Glebe, Athleague, Co. Roscommon		
<b>Eircode:</b>	F42 AV63		
<b>Name of Registered Provider:</b>	Dervla Connaughton		
<b>Service type:</b>	Part Time		
<b>Date(s) of Inspection:</b>	22/01/2025		
<b>No of pre-school children:</b>	AM	20	PM 8

<b>Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:</b>	Early Year's Inspectorate, TUSLA, Child and Family Agency, Government Buildings, Convent Road, Roscommon, Co. Roscommon
<b>Inspection undertaken by:</b>	A. Kennedy
<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).

Conditions if applicable

Not applicable

### Description of service

This service has been in operation as an early year's service since 2007. It is privately owned and operated. The premises is located in a rural area within close proximity of the village of Athleague in Co. Roscommon. It operates from a large L shaped room to the rear of the registered provider's domestic dwelling with a separate entrance.

The sanitary accommodation is within close proximity of the preschool room and the service has a large outdoor play area located at the side of the premises with direct access from the preschool room.

It provides a morning session from 09:00hrs-12:00hrs and an optional part-time service is provided until 14:00hrs

The service is provided five days per week for children aged from two to six years of age.

### Staffing

The registered provider is the named adult in charge of operating the service. An additional adult is available to act as deputy if required. The service employs two adults to work with the registered provider on a daily basis. The three adults hold a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education. Two relief persons are available to act in event of staff absence.

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

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 on the day of the inspection. It was advised by the registered provider that in her absence, the deputy person in charge is the designated person in charge

(b) The registered provider was on the premises throughout the period of the inspection.

Documentary evidence indicated that either the designated person in charge or deputy were available, on the premises, when the pre-school children were present.

The files for three staff and two relief staff were reviewed.

(2)(a) &(b) Ten references on file in respect of the five staff were from a past employer or a source other than a past employer.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all 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) Not applicable as none of the staff had worked outside the jurisdiction, for six months or more, while over the age of 18 years of age.

(4) The five staff hold a Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) at a Level 5 or over, 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) At all times during the period of the inspection, the person in charge ensured that an adequate number of staff were working directly with the children.

(2) Documentary evidence in the form of attendance records and staff rosters indicated that adult child ratios were adhered to.

On the morning of the inspection, there were twenty pre-school children aged between 3 years to 4 years 9 months. There were three staff working directly with the children. In the afternoon there were eight children aged between 3 years to 4 years and 9 months with two staff working directly with the children.

(8)(a) The registered provider ensured that there were two staff on the premises at all times while 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,*

### Compliance Information

- Hand washing was carried out regularly in the setting independently by the children with gentle reminders from the adults after toileting, messy play activities and prior to consuming snack.
- Adequate tables and chairs were provided for the children, and they were encouraged to self-feed and assisted by the staff if necessary.
- The snack time was unhurried, and the children were encouraged to be independent. Much conversation was noted between the adults and the children during these periods.

- A healthy eating policy was in place within the service. There was evidence of healthy eating with the children consuming a morning snack of sandwiches, crackers, rice cakes, a selection of fruits to include strawberries, melons, pineapple, raspberries, raisins, yoghurts and yoghurt drinks.
- The children had water/juices to drink.
- There was a cosy area within the preschool room with child sized couches provided which could be adapted as a rest area for the children to rest or opt out of activities if they so wished.
- Children were encouraged by the adults to do things for themselves and be self-caring around their toileting needs and the staff were available if required.
- The children enjoyed freedom of movement within the playroom on the day of the inspection.
- Aprons were provided for messy play activities.
- The indoor environment was comfortable, pleasant and well laid out to meet the needs of the children attending the service. There was a wide variety of play equipment and materials to stimulate each area of a child's development. An extensive selection of equipment was available within the preschool room for children's use to include an arts and craft area with a selection of materials to include paper, markers, chalk, glitter, paint and glueing materials, a table top area with a large selection of jigsaws, a kitchen/home area with child-sized furniture with dolls and accessories, food items and food accessories, a play shop with food items and cash registers, a selection of dress up items and a vanity unit, a music area, a construction area with a selection of wooden and plastic blocks, tools and helmets, a reading/rest area with a large selection of books, fine motor activities to include threading exercises, pegging and sorting exercises, miniature animals and cars/trucks, a dolls house with accessories, a wooden farm set with a selection farm accessories and a stable with a selection of horses.
- A selection of Montessori equipment was also available to include practical life exercises, sensorial and early language and maths materials.
- Messy play opportunities were provided with the provision of sand, water, play dough and paint.
- The furniture provided in the service was low level and appropriate for the children attending.
- The outdoor play area is located to the side of the pre-school with direct access from the preschool room. The play area was well equipped to include an artificial grassed area with a large wooden climbing frame with a playhouse and swing set, balancing beams, a basketball hoop, a wooden climbing frame and playhouse and a selection of slides. A mud play kitchen with kitchen accessories, a sand area with digging accessories and a selection of bikes/trikes and scooters were provided in the sheltered play area.

- A large sheltered outdoor area was equipped with storage hooks for the children's outdoor clothing and wellie boots, cubby holes for extraneous equipment, a play kitchen with accessories, a picnic bench, art easels, chalk play and outdoor play equipment to include bikes, trikes and scooters.

### 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:

- Waste disposal facilities were inaccessible to the preschool children.
- The entrance door of the pre-school service was secured on arrival to the service and remained secured throughout the inspection thus preventing children from exiting and unauthorised persons from entering the premises.
- All cleaning products were stored on high shelves and within a locked storage room which was inaccessible to the preschool children.
- Electric cables were secured and out of child reach.
- Tabletops were wiped clean before and after snack breaks.
- The toys and play equipment were maintained in a clean and hygienic condition.
- A staff member accompanied children to the sanitary area to ensure child safety.

##### Infection Control:

- A wash hand basin with hot and cold-water supply was provided for children to wash their hands after play, before break times and after play in the outdoor area. A dispenser with disposable paper towels was wall mounted beside the wash hand basins. Liquid soap was provided.
- The openable windows in the playroom ensured a good flow of fresh air directly from outside into the room when children played indoors.
- Foot pedal operated lidded bins were provided in the service for the disposal of waste.
- The water in the sanitary areas was thermostatically controlled to ensure effective hand washing. The temperatures taken on the day was 28.1°C which is within the recommended range of maximum 43°C for effective handwashing.

- Adequate supplies of disposable tissues were readily available in the playroom.

### Administration of Medication:

- Medication was not observed to be administered to any child during the inspection. The staff were aware of safe procedures for storing and administering medication.

### Fire Safety:

- The emergency exit routes were observed to be free from obstruction during the inspection.
- Monthly fire drills were carried out on the premises to ensure the children were familiar with the procedure in event of an emergency.

## Non-Compliance Information

### General Safety:

1. Garda vetting was available for the five staff members. However, two of these vetting disclosures were not dated within the previous three years and were not in adherence to the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice 'EYI-RN12.3 Renewal of Garda Vetting'.
2. The door from the preschool room to the registered providers main residence had no system of security posing a potential access/safety risk.
3. The surface coating of handbasin waste in the children's sinks were worn and sharp and could pose a potential safety concern.

### Outdoor area:

There were safety risks in the outdoor play area to the side of the premises including

4. The artificial grass at the climbing frame and swing set was ripped and could pose a potential trip hazard.
5. A play wheelbarrow had evidence of rust with paint flaking, chipped, and worn requiring repair/repainting.
6. A lath of wood was missing on one of the wooden gates and a section of wood was broken on the second gate in the outdoor area which could pose a potential safety concern.
7. A wall mounted chalk board was in poor condition with two sections missing posing a potential safety concern.

### Infection Control:

8. Perishable foods were stored in the children's lunch boxes within the preschool room with the temperature recorded at 18.1°C. Perishable foods must be stored at a temperature below 5°C.
9. In the designated home area, a child sized couch had evidence of being frayed and torn, thereby preventing effective cleaning.

10. The nappy changing mat was torn and in poor condition proving difficult to effectively clean.
11. In the outdoor play area, a play sand was uncovered resulting in potential access by vermin /rodents.
12. A section of the plastered wall of the lobby area adjoining the children's sanitary accomodation was damaged proving difficult to effectively clean.

### Action submitted by the Registered Provider

#### **Corrective & Preventive Action**

The registered provider submitted a written response to the office of the Early Years Inspectorate to advise

#### **General Safety:**

1. The garda vetting forms have been updated and the staff files will be checked on a regular basis to ensure they are within date
2. A latch has been fitted on the door from the preschool room to the main residence and daily checks will be carried out to ensure it is secure.
3. The handbasin plugs have been removed and they will be replaced with new ones. Daily safety checks will be carried out on the premises and will include the sanitary accomodation.

#### **Outdoor area**

4. The artificial grass will be replaced over the easter holidays when the children are not in attendance. The artificial grass has been included on the daily safety checks.
5. The rusty wheelbarrow has been removed and disposed of and the outdoor equipment will be checked daily and removed if rusty or broken.
6. The laths of wood have been replaced on the two gates, and these are included on the daily safety checks.
7. The chalk boards: have been removed from the garden and will do daily outdoor checks for any wear and tear of equipment

#### **Infection control**

8. Perishable foods are now stored in fridge.
9. Couch ripped which has now been removed and will do daily checks of all school equipment to make sure it's clean and free of any wear and tear
10. Nappy mat torn I have removed torn nappy mat and replaced with a new one and will endeavour to do daily checks on all school equipment for any wear and tear
11. The registered provider will ensure that the sand pit is covered when not in use.
12. Awaiting plasterer to re-plaster the area and will forward the evidence once complete.

#### **Supporting documentation submitted**

### General Safety:

1. Evidence of the renewed garda vetting for two staff.
2. Photographic evidence of the securing mechanism on the door to the main residence
3. Photographic evidence of the hand basin plugs removed
4. No evidence submitted
5. No evidence submitted
6. Photographic evidence of the replaced laths of wood on the two gates.
7. Photographic evidence of the removed wall mounted chalk board

### Infection Control:

8. No evidence submitted
9. Photographic evidence of the removed child sized couch.
10. Photographic evidence of a new nappy changing mat.
11. No evidence submitted
12. No evidence submitted

### Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions taken and evidence submitted. The non-compliances identified under Regulation 23 have been partially addressed.

No evidence was submitted on points 4,5, 8,11 and 12. These will be reviewed on next inspection.

## 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 a person trained in first aid for children was available at all times to the children attending the pre-school service.

(2)(a) The first aid box was appropriately stored and easily accessible by the adults in a conspicuous position in the preschool room.

### Non-Compliance Information

(2)(b) The medium and large wound dressings and the eye pads had past their expiry date and two triangular bandages were required.

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

#### Corrective and Preventive Action

The registered provider submitted a written response to state that the First aid box has been refilled, and weekly checks will be carried out to ensure all items are available and in date

#### Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence of the replaced wound dressing and eye pads.

### Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions taken and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 25 has been adequately addressed and will be reviewed on next inspection.

## 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 firefighting 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 written record was available of the monthly fire drills completed in the service. The last recorded fire drill was dated 7<sup>th</sup> of January 2025.

(b)The smoke and fire detection alarm system for the premises had the last annual service dated 11<sup>th</sup> of March 2024.

(4) Notices were displayed within the service of the procedures to be followed in the event of fire in the premises.

### Non-Compliance Information

(1)(b) Records of the annual servicing by a competent person, of the premises firefighting equipment were not available. The last documented record presented was dated 8<sup>th</sup> of January 2024.

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

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

The registered provider submitted a written response to the office of the early years inspectorate to advise that (1)(b) the fire equipment has been serviced on 22<sup>nd</sup> of February 2025.

#### **Supporting documentation submitted**

Photographic evidence was submitted to advise of the service record of the fire equipment.

### Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions taken and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 26 has been adequately addressed and will be reviewed on next inspection.

## Part VI - Safety

### Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

#### Compliance Information

The service's insurance with an expiry date of 27/03/2025 covered 22 part time children and included the following,

- public liability,
- personal accident,
- insurance against fire and theft,
- outings undertaken as part of the service