

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

<b>TUSLA Identifier:</b>	TU2015TY018
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<b>Name of Service:</b>	Step Ahead Creche
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<b>Address of Service:</b>	Clonbealy Business Park, Newport, Co Tipperary
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<b>Eircode:</b>	V94 PC43
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<b>Name of Registered Provider:</b>	Muneeza Sanawar
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<b>Service type:</b>	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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<b>Date of Inspection:</b>	07/01/2026
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<b>No of pre-school children:</b>	AM	26	PM	24
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<b>Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:</b>	Glenmorgan Building, Ferryhouse, Clonmel, Co Tipperary E91RF38
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<b>Inspection undertaken by:</b>	Antoinette McNamara
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<b>Title:</b>	Early Years Inspector
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### 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>	N/A
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### Description of service

Step Ahead Creche is a full day care service which provides care and education to children aged 1 to 6 years old. A registered school age care service was also provided for children aged 4 to 12 years old. The service operates Monday to Friday, 07:30 to 18:00 for 48 weeks of the year. This includes a three-hour sessional service that is funded under the Early Childhood Care and Education Scheme (ECCE) for eligible children and is operated Monday to Friday, 09:30 to 12:30 for 38 weeks of the year. The service is operated from a single storey, detached premises in a business park in the town of Newport in Co Tipperary. There are four activity rooms: three used by the early years children and one by the school age children; an office, kitchen, staff room, sanitary accommodation areas and secure outdoor play area.

### Staffing

The registered provider is the person in charge and works in the service daily. There are eight other staff employed in the service including staff who work directly with the early years children and staff who work with the school aged children. Staff working with early years children held qualifications in Early Childhood Education at level 5 and above on the National Framework of Qualifications.

### 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.

Regulation 9 (1)(a)(b)(2)(a)(b)(c)(d)(4) Management and recruitment,  
Regulation 11(1)(2) Staffing levels,  
Regulation 19 (1)(a) Health, welfare, and development of the child,  
Regulation 23 Safeguarding health, safety, and welfare of the child,  
Regulation 25 (1)(2)(a)(b) First aid  
Regulation 26 (1)(a)(b)(4) Fire safety  
Regulation 30 (2) Minimum space requirements

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, 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 is the designated person in charge. There is a named deputy who is able to deputise, as required.

(b) A person in charge was present on the day of inspection. A person in charge was present daily. The staff files for eight staff and the registered provider were reviewed on the day.

(2)(a) Two written and validated references were available for each staff member working at the service.

(b) Where past employer references were not available, there were references from sources such as previous schools and colleges.

2(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for eight staff members and the registered provider. In the case of one staff member, 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. Review of the curriculum vitae indicated that police vetting was not required.

(4) Certificates of qualifications for the staff working with early years children were available on file demonstrating that they held a qualification at level 5 and above on the National Framework of Qualifications.

### 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.*

#### Compliance Information

(1) At the time of inspection, there was an adequate number of adults responsible for the direct care of the children.

(2) The adult child ratios during the day of inspection met the requirements of the regulations as follows:

- Montessori room: nine children cared for by one staff.
- Pre-school room: nine children cared for by one staff.
- Toddler room: 10 children cared for by 2 staff.

### 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

(1)(a) The following was observed on the day of inspection through direct observation and discussions with staff:

#### Basic needs:

The children enjoyed freedom of movement both indoors, in their rooms, and outdoors in one of the outdoor play areas. There were cosy areas in each room where the children could rest and relax during the day. These spaces

were furnished with floor rugs or padded vinyl mats and child sized vinyl covered sofas. Camp beds were available if a child required a sleep during the day. There were cots available to the children who needed them.

Toilets and nappy changing areas were directly accessible from the activity rooms which supported the children to use the toilets independently when they needed to. Nappy changing was carried out at regular times throughout the day and when required. The service had a healthy eating policy. Staff sat with the children during snack times; this encouraged conversations and provided any assistance if needed. Children brought morning snack from home which they could eat at mealtimes or when hungry. A main meal and an afternoon snack were provided by the service. Drinking water was available to the children throughout the day. Children were seen to play outside in the morning and staff reported that children play outside daily.

### **Physical and material environment:**

The environment in the service was comfortable and inviting. The walls were painted with bright colours and murals. Children were given the opportunity for messy play. This was observed when the children were playing with rice in the pre-school room. In each of the classrooms, a variety of defined areas of interest were provided for the children to play with. These included a kitchen area, a library area, and craft area. Low-level shelving provided children with access to a wide selection of activities suitable for the children in each of the classrooms. Children in the preschool rooms were observed to engage in arts and crafts, singing songs and building towers. Children in the toddler room were observed playing with blocks and having stories read by staff. The outdoor space was secure to prevent children leaving the area. Children's gross motor development was supported through access to games, wheeled toys, a slide and climbing wall. Additional resources were available in the storage shed.

### **Supporting Relationships:**

Staff members were observed to treat the children with respect and a positive regard. They sat with children in small groups or individually, engaged in conversation with them and listened attentively to the children as they spoke. An example of this was observed in the play school room when the children were talking about life at home and their siblings.

The environment was inclusive and representative of the children attending the service. Children's identity and belonging was fostered through the display of their arts and crafts, birthday wall, individual portraits of the children. The family wall was creatively displayed to provide an important link between home and preschool. Languages other than English were used to promote diversity and the inclusion of multilingual children.

## 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 main door to the service had to be opened by a staff member, therefore an unsupervised person could not enter the building. The outdoor play areas were secured to prevent children leaving unsupervised and unauthorised persons could not enter the area. The kitchen area was inaccessible to children and situated away from the classrooms. Pinch guards covered the hinges on all doors to prevent injury to children. All cleaning agents were stored inaccessible to children. Blind cords were secured to the wall.

##### Fire safety:

Fire exits were found to be unobstructed on the day of inspection.  
There were fire evacuation procedures displayed in a prominent area within the service.  
Firefighting equipment was present in the service.

#### Non-Compliance Information

##### General safety:

Garda vetting disclosures for one staff member was not dated within the previous three years in adherence to the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice 'EYI-RN12.3 Renewal of Garda Vetting'.

#### Action submitted by the Registered Provider

##### Corrective & Preventive Action

##### General safety:

Garda vetting was applied for the staff members whose vetting was out of date.

##### Supporting documentation submitted

##### General safety:

Photographic evidence of renewed Garda vetting was sent to the Early Years Inspector.

#### Summary Comment

All evidence submitted meets the requirements Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016.

### 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) There were staff trained in first aid responder (FAR) available to the children attending the service.

(2)(a) There was a suitably equipped first aid box stored in an easily accessible position.

(b) The first aid box was available to the children attending 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) There was a record of fire drills that had taken place in the service. The last fire drill was recorded as having taken place 26<sup>th</sup> of November 2025. The service was closed for the Christmas break; a fire drill was scheduled for the 7<sup>th</sup> of January 2026.

(b) There was a record available demonstrating that the smoke alarm system was last serviced in February 2025 and the firefighting equipment was last serviced in February 2025.

(4) There was a notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire displayed in a conspicuous position on the premises.

## Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

### Regulation 30 - Minimum space requirements

*(2) A registered provider of a full day care service or a part-time day care service shall ensure that the minimum amount of clear floor space specified in column (3) of Schedule 7 opposite a particular reference number specified in column (1) of that Schedule in respect of the age range of children specified in column (2) thereof at that reference number is available for each child in that age range attending the service.*

### Compliance Information

(2) A review of measurements of all the rooms was conducted during the inspection also. The service is currently registered to have a maximum of 30 children. The service has space capacity for 40 children but currently only has sanitary facilities to accommodate a maximum of 33 children.

The following table demonstrates the ages and numbers of children for each of the three rooms:

Room	Size	Age	Max capacity
Montessori room	30.91 m <sup>2</sup>	2-6 years	16 sessional children
		2-3 years	13 full day care
Pre-school room	26.15 m <sup>2</sup>	2-6 years	14 sessional children
		2-3 years	11 full day care
Toddler room	29.19 m <sup>2</sup>	1-2 years	10 full day care