

TUSLA REGULATORY INSPECTION REPORT



TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015TY024						
Name of Service:	First Steps						
Address of Service:	Marian Hall, Borrisoleigh, Co. Tipperary						
Email Address:	margooshea3@gmail.com						
Name of Registered Service Provider:	Margo O'Shea						
Type of Service Registered:	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Sessional</td> <td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> </table>	Sessional	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				
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Date of Inspection:	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>0</td> <td>2</td> <td>0</td> <td>3</td> <td>2</td> <td>2</td> </tr> </table>	0	2	0	3	2	2
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No of Pre-School Children present during Inspection:	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>AM</td> <td>23</td> <td>PM</td> <td>-</td> </tr> </table>	AM	23	PM	-		
AM	23	PM	-				
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Civic Offices, Limerick Road, Nenagh, Co. Tipperary						
Inspection undertaken by:	L McGeeney						
Title:	Early Years Inspector						

Areas which were the subject of this Inspection		
Governance	Health Welfare and Development of Child	Safety

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	<p>This sessional service was established in the town of Borrisoleigh in north Tipperary to provide care and education to children aged between 2 and 6 years old. The service operates from 9am to 12.30pm, Tuesday to Friday for 38 weeks of the year with places funded under the early childhood care and education scheme (ECCE/free preschool) for eligible children.</p>
Premises	<p>The service is operated from rooms in the Marian Hall in the town of Borrisoleigh. There are two activity rooms at the back of the hall, one large and one small, that are used by the service. The main hall is used as an access route for parents and children at the end of the session and for the storage of the children’s bags and coats. The stage in the hall is used for toy storage and as a quiet space for children to rest and play away from the main activity areas. There is an enclosed outdoor play area at the back of the premises.</p>
Staffing	<p>The registered provider and three other staff work directly with the children in the service. One staff member is employed under the access and inclusion model (AIM). Staff hold recognised qualifications in early childhood care and education at levels 5, 6 or 8 on the national framework of qualifications.</p>
Methodology	<p>Tusla’s Early Years Inspectorate (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.</p> <p>The findings on inspection are based on;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information obtained through examination of documentation • Direct observation • Discussion with relevant staff <p>This inspection was unannounced and focused on areas of Governance, Health, Welfare and Development of Child and Safety. Inspections may also focus on other areas as required.</p> <p>The inspection process has been amended to minimise the amount of time that inspectors spend in the service. A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 19 health welfare and development of child and regulation 23 Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child. As a result the scope of the inspection included both activity rooms and the outdoor play area.</p> <p>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.</p>
Acknowledgements	<p>The Inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the person in charge, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.</p>

GOVERNANCE

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.
- (6) Paragraph (4) shall not apply before 1 September 2021 to a person who—
- (a) has signed a declaration on or before 30 June 2016 to the effect that he or she intends to retire from employment in a pre-school service before 1 September 2021, and
 - (b) is in possession of a letter from the Minister confirming that paragraph (4) shall not apply to him or her before that date
- (6A is inserted by S.I. No.632 of 2016 CHILD CARE ACT 1991 (EARLY YEARS SERVICES) (AMENDMENT) REGULATIONS 2016 which states; Regulation 9 of the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations (S.I. No. 221 of 2016) is amended - in paragraph (4), by the substitution of "paragraphs (5), (6) and (6A)" for "paragraphs (5) and (6)", and (b) by the insertion of the following paragraph after paragraph (6): "
- (6A) Paragraph (4) shall not apply to an employee of a registered provider where - (a) the registered provider receives funding for the employment of the employee pursuant to a scheme funded by the Minister and known as the Access and Inclusion Model, and (b) the employment of the employee is for the purpose of providing support, pursuant to the scheme referred to in subparagraph (a), for a child attending the service to enable the child to participate in the programme known as the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) funding Programme."
- (7) A registered provider shall ensure that all employees, unpaid workers and contractors are appropriately supervised and provided with appropriate information, and where necessary training, including in relation to the following:
- (a) the policies, procedures and statements of the service specified in Schedule 5;
 - (b) Part VIIA (inserted by section 92 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013 (No. 40 of 2013)) of the Act, and
 - (c) these Regulations.

Compliance Information:

(1)(a) The registered provider was the person in charge on a daily basis and there was a person who could deputise in her absence.

Part III - Management and Staff

Regulation 9 - Management and Recruitment

(b) The deputy was the person in charge on the day of inspection and was present in the service for the duration of the inspection.

The staff file of the member of staff who had commenced working in the service since the last inspection on 21 March 2019 was reviewed as part of the inspection process:

(2)(a) Two written, validated references from past employers were available in respect of the member of staff.

(b) Not applicable as the references were from past employers.

(c) Garda vetting had been carried out in respect of the staff member and relevant documents were held on file.

(d) Not applicable as the member of staff had not lived outside the jurisdiction.

(4) All staff working in the service held recognised qualifications in early childhood care and education at levels 5, 6 or 8 on the national framework of qualifications.

(6)(a) Not applicable to this service as none of the staff had applied for an exemption to the qualification requirements under the grandfathering clause.

(b) Not applicable to this service as none of the staff required a letter of exemption to the qualification requirements from the minister.

(6A) Not applicable to this service as the member of staff employed under the access and inclusion model held recognised qualifications in early childhood care and education and special needs assistance at level 5 on the national framework of qualifications.

(7) The registered provider had developed policies, procedures and statements for the service that were made available to all staff working in the service. Staff were supported to engage in ongoing professional development including mandatory training such as child safeguarding and first aid.

Part III - Management and Staff

Regulation 10 - Policies, Procedures etc. of Pre-school service

A registered provider of a pre-school service shall ensure that the written policies, procedures and statements specified in Schedule 5 are in place for the service.

Compliance Information:

The policies, procedures and statements specified in Schedule 5 of these regulations had been developed by the registered provider for the service. Parents of children attending the service were given a parents handbook when their child was enrolled in the service which outlined the relevant policies and procedures.

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) thereof at that reference number is satisfied.
- (8) Without prejudice to paragraphs (2) to (7)—
- (c) a registered provider of a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that, where the person in charge operates the service single-handedly, a second person familiar with the operation of the service and in a position to provide assistance to the person in charge in operating the service is, at all times, within close distance of the service and available to attend the service to assist the person in charge in the event of an emergency.

Compliance Information:

- (1) There were three staff working directly with the 23 children aged between 3 and 5 years old who were present in the service on the day of inspection.
- (2) The adult/child ratio was maintained at higher than the minimum requirements of 1:11 for the duration of the inspection.
- (8)(c) Not applicable to this service as there were at least two staff present at all times while the service was in operation.

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:

- (1) Regulation 19 was assessed through direct observation, review of records and discussions with staff:
- BASIC NEEDS:**
- The children brought packed lunches in line with the healthy eating policy of the service. Lunch was at 11.25am on the day of inspection. Foods eaten by the children were mostly healthy and included: brown bread, pancakes, wraps, breadsticks, sandwiches, rice cakes, bagels, pasta, bread rolls and waffles. There was also fromage frais, cheese, smoothies and fruit (banana, cucumber, apples, watermelon, strawberries, blueberries and sultanas) with drinks of water or squash. There was a large container of drinking water with a dispenser spout from which the children could get a drink of water when they wanted one. Staff supervised the children and assisted them as needed.
 - All of the children with the exception of one, were toilet trained and used the toilet independently throughout the morning.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 19 - Health, Welfare and Development of Child

This was facilitated by the children’s sanitary accommodation area being easily accessible off the main activity room. A nappy changing mat was available if required by the child who was not yet toilet trained.

- The children enjoyed freedom of movement both indoors and outdoors throughout the inspection. The back door which led to the outdoor play area was kept open to allow for both ventilation and the free movement of children between the indoor and outdoor spaces. The children also moved between the two indoor environments to access the activities that they wanted to engage in.
- There was a cosy area in the main room beside the library where the children could rest and relax when they wanted to. This area was furnished with two child sized armchairs. The stage area of the hall was also used as a quiet rest and relaxation area.
- The children were observed to behave appropriately for their age and stage of development. They were supported by the staff to learn to share, listen, take turns and to be kind to their friends. The staff praised the children for their good behaviour. They helped the children to manage their behaviour when they found it difficult to do so on their own, for example, by separating friends during structured activities like circle time so that all of the children could listen and participate.

SUPPORT RELATIONSHIPS AROUND CHILDREN:

- The same team of staff cared for the children each day in favourable adult/child ratios. The staff demonstrated their knowledge of the children likes, strengths, interests and abilities and provided each child with opportunities to engage in activities that they liked. The children were observed playing in pairs, small groups or alone at a large variety of activities. A group of children that were outdoors were engaged in imaginative play. They had climbed on top of the caterpillar tunnel and sat astride it pretending it was a train, the child at the front was the driver and called out ‘all aboard, all aboard’. Children in the small activity room were playing with the home-made play dough at the table while another child was seeing how tall he could build a tower with large plastic bricks. In the main room children were working at the tables with staff making jigsaws, colouring or finishing their craft projects. Other children were engaged in imaginative play with the shopping trolley, reading books and making music.
- The staff were observed to give children individual time and attention especially if they were struggling with a task, managing their emotions or were upset. During circle time one child hurt her finger and needed to be comforted. She went to the staff member and climbed into her lap for a cuddle while the staff member held her and continued to listen to and engage with the other children in circle time.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 19 - Health, Welfare and Development of Child

- The staff listened to the children and were interested in what they had to say. During circle time the children discussed pancake Tuesday, which had been celebrated in the service the day before the inspection.
- There was a busy, noisy, happy atmosphere in the service on the day of inspection.
- Staff met parents at drop off and collection times when they could talk to each other about how their child was doing. Staff also communicated with parents by phone and email.

PHYSICAL AND MATERIAL ENVIRONMENT:

- The children had access to two activity rooms and an enclosed outdoor play area. The main hall was also accessible to them and could be used for one-to-one activities away from the general play area.
- The main activity room was a bright square room with direct access to the main hall, sanitary accommodation area, kitchen, storage room beside the stage and the small activity room. This space was furnished with child sized tables and chairs as well as some adult sized chairs. Toys and materials were stored on open, mobile shelving units which were easy to access and could be moved around if needed. For example, the shelves with Montessori equipment were turned around so that they were only used at Montessori work time and not during free play time. The interest areas in this room included: library and relation area, shop, small world areas (dolls house, barbeque), puzzles and manipulative toys area and tuff tray table with dinosaurs.
- The small activity room was between the main room and the outdoor play area. The children passed through this room to access the outdoor area. Their rubber boots and outdoor suits were stored in this space. One wall was shelved and used for toy storage. There was a child sized table and chairs, farm and animals, large plastic building bricks, play dough and tabletop activities such as pegs and boards. The children's scrap books containing samples of their work were stored here.
- The outdoor play area had been further developed since the last inspection in March 2019. An area between the back door and the grass had been covered in concrete and covered with an open sided shelter with a corrugated plastic roof. This new space enabled the outdoor area to be used on a daily basis in all weathers. It was furnished with a play kitchen and a mud kitchen with lots of accessories. Staff brought out basins of water from the kitchen for the children to use in the mud kitchen. The grass area of the outdoor area was equipped with a caterpillar tunnel, slide, wheelbarrow, sand tables, wall mounted blackboards, planted areas, digging areas, table and chairs.

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.

<p>Compliance Information:</p>	<p>The following was observed which supported the health, safety and welfare of the children attending the service.</p> <p>GENERAL SAFETY:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The service had several entrance/exit points. The children attending the service used the front doors which opened onto the main road through the town to leave the premises at the end of the session. They entered the premises through a side door into the main room from the passageway at the side of the building. The back door, from the smaller activity room, opened into the outdoor play area. There were other doors off the main hall that were fire escapes and not used by the service to access or leave the premises. The doors were secured while the service was in operation to prevent any unauthorised access to or exit from the premises and to prevent any child from gaining unsupervised access to the roadway. • The outdoor play area was enclosed by concrete walls topped with corrugated metal sheets which prevented any unauthorised access to or from this space. • Hot water for hand washing was heated by an electric water heater that was thermostatically controlled not to exceed 43°C. The hot water was 27°C on the day of inspection. <p>INFECTION CONTROL:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good hand hygiene was practiced in the service. The children washed their hands before eating and after using the toilet, messy play or outdoor play. Hand sanitiser gel was available in dispenser units on the wall and in a free-standing unit by the front door. • The service had a policy on infection prevention and control that was being implemented in the service.
<p>Non-Compliance Information:</p>	<p>GENERAL SAFETY:</p> <p>1. The surface temperature of the radiators in the main activity room was 63°C on the day of inspection which exceeded the maximum safe recommended temperature of 50°C.</p>
<p>Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider</p>	<p>CORRECTIVE ACTION</p> <p>GENERAL SAFETY:</p> <p>1. The thermostat for the radiators has been turned down to 50°C.</p>

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 23 - Safeguarding Health, Safety and Welfare of child

	<p><u>PREVENTIVE ACTION</u> GENERAL SAFETY: 1. The thermostat and radiator temperature will be monitored to ensure it does not exceed 50°C.</p>
Summary Comment:	All evidence submitted meets the requirements of the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 25 - First Aid

	<p>(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.</p> <p>(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.</p>
Compliance Information:	<p>(1) Staff held current certification in first aid including three staff with first aid response (FAR) training.</p> <p>(2)(a) There was a first aid box stored on the shelves in the smaller activity room. (b) The first aid box was available if needed by a child attending the service.</p>

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 26 - Fire Safety Measures

	<p>(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</p> <p>(4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of fire shall be displayed in a conspicuous position in the premises</p>
Compliance Information:	<p>(1)(a) There was a record of the monthly fire drills that were undertaken in the service, most recently on 18 February 2022. (b) There was a record of the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment and wired smoke alarm system. Firefighting equipment was serviced annually, most recently in March 2021 and the smoke alarm system was serviced in November 2021.</p> <p>(4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire were displayed on the door of the main activity room.</p>