

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015TY078
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Name of Service:	Tiny Steps Pre-school
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Address of Service:	Feemore, Borrisokane, Co. Tipperary
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Eircode:	E45 W668
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Name of Registered Provider:	Joyce Cahill
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Service type:	Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	22/10/2024
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No of pre-school children:	AM	23	PM	-
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	North Tipperary Civic Offices, Limerick Road, Nenagh, Co. Tipperary
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Inspection undertaken by:	L McGeeney and A McNamara
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Title:	Early Years Inspectors
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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).

Conditions if applicable	Not applicable
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Description of service

This part-time service was established to provide care and education to children aged between 2 and 6 years old. A registered school aged care service is also provided to children aged 4 to 12 years. The service operates Monday to Friday, 7.30am to 6pm for 48 weeks of the year. This includes two three-hour sessions each day for 38 weeks of the year, with the morning session operating from 8.45am to 11.45am and the afternoon session from 12.15pm to 3.15pm. Places are funded under the early childhood care and education scheme for eligible children. The service is operated from part of a detached, single storey, residential house in a rural area near the town of Borrisokane in north Tipperary. The service has its own entrance door at the front of the premises which leads into an entrance lobby, two activity rooms and sanitary accommodation areas. The back garden of the premises has been developed as an outdoor play area for the service.

Staffing

The registered provider works with the children in the service on a daily basis supported by up to four members of staff, including staff employed under the access and inclusion model (AIM). There was a transition year student on work experience in the service on the day of inspection.

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.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9(2)(4), 11(1)(2)(4)(8), 15, 20(1)(3), 21, 22, 24 and 28.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 15 Record of a Pre-School Child.

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 inspectors wish 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

(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

The staff files of five members of staff were reviewed as part of the inspection process:

(2)(a) Written references from past employers, with validations where required, were available in respect of all five staff.

(b) A written, validated reference from a source other than a past employer was available in respect of one member of staff.

(c) Garda vetting had been carried out in respect of each member of staff and relevant documents were held on file. The service had a system in place to ensure that re-vetting of staff was carried out on a three-yearly basis, in line with best practice.

(d) Not applicable as none of the staff had lived outside the state for a period of six consecutive months or longer.

(4) All staff who worked with the children held recognised qualifications in early childhood care and education at levels 5, 6 or 8 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.

(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.

(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) There were 4 staff, including the registered provider, working directly with 23 children aged between 2 years 11 months and 5 years old on the morning of the inspection. All of the children present on the day of inspection attended on a sessional basis. The children and staff were divided between two rooms with 9 children and 1 member of staff in the Yellow room and 14 children and 3 staff in the Green room. There was a transition year student also present on the morning of the inspection but not included in the adult to child ratios.

(3) The adult to child ratio was maintained at greater than the minimum requirements of 1 adult to 11 children.

(8)(a) There were at least two staff present in the service while it was in operation.

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-

- (a) a parent or guardian of a pre-school child but only in respect of the record relating to that child,*
- (b) an employee who is authorised in that behalf by the registered provider, and*
- (c) an authorised person.*

Compliance Information

(1) A sample of six registration forms were assessed as part of the registration process. The forms were found to contain all the required information as detailed under parts (a) to (i) of this regulation.

(3) The registration forms were open for inspection on the premises by an authorised person.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 20 – Facilities for rest and play

- (1) Subject to this regulation, a registered provider shall ensure that-
- (a) having regard to the number of pre-school children attending the service, their respective ages and the amount of time they spend on the premises, there are adequate and suitable facilities for each child to play indoors and, where required by these Regulations, outdoors, during the day, and
 - (b) there are adequate and suitable facilities for a pre-school child to rest during the day, and in the case of an overnight pre-school service, during the day and the night.
- (3) A registered provider of a full day care service, a part-time day care service or a childminding service, other than such a service to which paragraph (2) applies, shall ensure that-
- (a) a suitable, safe and secure outdoor space to which the pre-school children attending the service have access on a daily basis is provided on the premises.

Compliance Information

- (1)(a) The children had access to one of the two activity rooms in the service as well as to daily outdoor play opportunities. On the day of inspection all of the children went outside to play after snack time. The activity rooms were bright, with natural light entering the rooms through openable windows along two walls in the Green room and one wall in the Yellow room. The rooms were connected by a set of double doors between the rooms which could be opened to allow the children to flow between both spaces, or closed to allow the rooms to function as two separate spaces. Both rooms were comfortable and well laid out in a number of well-defined interest areas which supported the children's self-directed learning and exploration.
- (b) There were cosy seating areas in each room where the children could rest and relax as required. Sleep facilities were not required on the day of inspection as all of the children attended for only three hours each day.
- (3)(b) The outdoor play area provided a rich learning environment for the children with a wide variety of built equipment in the enclosed garden. There was an outdoor classroom in one corner of the outdoor area which provided the children with a sheltered play space that could be used in all weathers. The ground surfaces were a mixture of concrete, grass and bark mulch. The area was enclosed with fencing and gates that ensured that the area was secure yet still enabled the children to view the surrounding fields.

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 service was well furnished and equipped both indoors and outdoors. There were child sized tables and chairs as well as adult chairs in both rooms and in the outdoor classroom. There were child-sized sofas in the cosy seating areas. The toys and materials were displayed on open shelving units or in specific units, such as those in the play kitchen, which made them visible to the children and easy for them to access independently.

There was a hanging storage unit, on the back of one door in each room, with pockets large enough to hold one drink bottle. There was a pocket for each of the children to store their drink bottles and access them when they wanted a drink.

There were toys and materials available to support all areas of development including: small world toys, arts and crafts materials, sensory materials, construction materials, books, dress up and imaginative play materials. There were also seasonal toys to support the current themes of ‘autumn’ and ‘Halloween’. Outdoor toys and equipment included: swings, climbing frames, slides, sand pit, wooden ship and teepee, balance beams, ride-on toys, blackboard, chalk and seating areas.

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 service had a healthy eating policy. Children brought a packed lunch to eat at snack time. Foods eaten on the day of inspection included: crackers, sandwiches, cheese, flapjacks, yoghurt, fromage frais, apples, bananas, blueberries, raspberries, strawberries and mandarins. The children brought drinks of water or squash that they could access throughout the day. Drink bottles were refilled with water when empty.

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) Staff were responsible for recording the daily attendance of each child. The service used a pre-populated weekly attendance record for this purpose.

(3)(a) The staff met any visitors to the service at the entrance door before allowing them access to the premises if appropriate.

(b) A record was maintained of any visitors to the service.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The service held current insurance for up to 27 children to attend at any one time valid until 27 March 2025.