

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

<b>TUSLA Identifier:</b>	TU2015WD078		
<b>Name of Service:</b>	St. Stephen's Pre School		
<b>Address of Service:</b>	St. Stephens B.N.S., 25 Patrick Street, Waterford City, Co. Waterford		
<b>Eircode:</b>	X91 T288		
<b>Name of Registered Provider:</b>	Sinead Lowe		
<b>Service type:</b>	Sessional		
<b>Date of Inspection:</b>	25/06/2024		
<b>No of pre-school children:</b>	AM	13	PM N/A
<b>Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:</b>	Waterford Community Services Cork Road Waterford		
<b>Inspection undertaken by:</b>	M. Ryan.		
<b>Title:</b>	Early Years Inspector.		
<b>Authority to Inspect</b>			
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>	Not applicable		

### Description of service

St. Stephen's Pre-School is located in inner city Waterford. The service opened in 1980 and is managed by the board of management of the St. Stephen's Boys National School. The service operates from a scout hall building located on the grounds of De La Salle St. Stephen's Boys National School. The room can accommodate a total of 22 children at any one time. The service has total use of all the primary school facilities including the various outdoor playgrounds. St Stephen Pre-school presently offers a sessional Early Childhood Care and Education Scheme (ECCE) from 09:00hrs to 12:00hrs Monday to Friday for children aged 3 to 5 years of age.

### Staffing

The registered provider is the principal of the national school. The service employs three childcare staff to work directly with the children.

### 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. The inspection focused on the following Regulations:

Regulation 9 – Management and recruitment

Regulation 11 - Staffing levels

Regulation 19 - Health, welfare and development of child

Regulation 23 - Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child

Regulation 27 – Supervision

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, person in charge, 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*
- (c) there is a clear management structure in the service that identifies the lines of authority and accountability in the service and the specific roles and responsibilities of each employee and unpaid worker.*

*(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-*

*(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*

*(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 pre-school leader was the designated person in charge. The service also had a named person who was able to deputise as required.
- (b) Both the pre-school leader and the registered provider were present in the service for the duration of the inspection.
- (c) St Stephens pre-school was governed by the School Board of Management. The registered provider was the school principal and a member of the board of management. There was documentation available that demonstrated the management structure for the service which identified the lines of authority and accountability in the service.
- (2)
- There was no change in the staff since the last inspection.
- (c)
- There were Garda vetting disclosures available for all 3 staff working directly with the children in the service. All 3 of the Garda vetting disclosures had been re-vetted in the last 3 years.
- (4)
- There was evidence that all staff employed to work directly with the children held at least a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 6 on the National Qualifications Framework. There was evidence of continuous professional development and qualification certificates on file.

### 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)

On the day of inspection, the staff: child ratios met the requirement for the Childcare Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016.

(3)

In the pre-school room there were 13 children from 3 to 5 years of age being cared for by 3 childcare staff members.

### 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-*
- (b) appropriate and suitable care practices are in place in the pre-school service, having regard to the number of children attending the service and the nature of their needs.*

#### Compliance Information

(1)(b) Regulation 19 was assessed through direct observation, review of records and discussion with staff. The following was observed and explained in relation to the provision of the programme of care and activities for the children attending the service.

St. Stephen pre- school operated from De La Salle Scout Hall which was a stand-alone building nestled among the many buildings of the national school. As the building was used for other school activities the staff were required to set up the room daily. The building had been recently refurbished with new windows and doors repainted with

new brightly coloured floor covering. The staff remarked that the room felt more spacious and was more pleasant to work in.

On arrival at the service the staff and children welcomed the inspector. There was an air of excitement and anticipation in the service due to the forthcoming summer break and the sports day due to take place the following day. The children were observed to be comfortable and familiar with the staff, the leader attributed this to the small numbers and high staff ratios, it was observed that the children benefited favourably as they were receiving as much individual attention as they needed.

The room was well-resourced and laid out with equipment and toys of interest for the developmental stages and ages of the children. Children were observed playing in small groups with tabletop activities. The boys went themselves to the storage rooms to collect some of the large handheld trucks /fire brigades / cement mixers and tractors. It was evident that the children were familiar and enjoyed playing with these particular toys. Children's craft work and family photographs were displayed on notice boards around the room.

The staff were preparing, collating and adding the finishing touches to the children's 'learning scrap books' for the planned graduation in the following days to which all parents were invited.

Monthly staff meetings were used to plan the play-based curriculum. The themes for the month of June were documented on a white board as Water and Summer which was developed during the month in accordance with the children's emerging interests. The pre-school leader reported that that the pre-school had a recent visit from a member of the RNLI and the highlight of the visit for the children was the opportunity to try on buoyancy aids. The children were observed reciting action songs about fish and mister sun.

The school had engaged an outside catering company to supply free school lunches, each lunch was ordered by the parents on a weekly basis online. Children were observed preparing for the lunch with hand washing and table setting. A 'leader boy' was appointed on a daily basis to distribute the table mats that had each child's photograph enlarged and laminated. The staff sat with the children while eating and the lunches were observed to be healthy, nutritious and sufficient with fresh fruit, yogurts, and sweet and savory wraps and sandwiches. Children were given as much time as they needed to eat their lunch in a chatty, relaxed atmosphere.

When children were all finished eating, they tidied up and prepared to go to the large tarmacadam junior school playground. The children were observed to be excited going to the expansive outdoor playground where staff organised ball games for them.

At the rear of the school property there was a closed walled in garden which was part of the old Waterford City walls with a tower and a large, grassed area. This was known to the children as the secret garden. Since the last inspection the service had introduced an outdoor children's kitchen to this area. The preschool leader commented how fortunate the school were to have this space in the middle of inner-city Waterford in addition to the fact that the use of this green space was made easy as it was maintained by the school throughout the year. The preschool leader spoke of how therapeutic the natural environment was for the children's moods and how this garden had a calming influence on the children.

### Part VI - Safety

#### Regulation 27 – Supervision

*A registered provider shall ensure that pre-school children attending the service are supervised at all times.*

#### Compliance Information

The service ensured that all children were appropriately supervised at all times throughout the inspection.

At the rear of the property there was a closed walled in garden which was part of the old city walls. The children and staff used this area regularly. Entry into this area was via a small timber door that had a high-level bolt and lock that the pre-school leader informed was locked while the children were using this space therefore supervision was easy to conduct during this time.

There were established protocols with parents and guardians for children transitioning to and from the school. The pick-up arrangements were observed where parents and guardians waited at the main school barrier that was approximately 110 metres from the street. All three staff were involved in this hand over and stood at different points with the children while each child was handed over individually by the pre-school leader to their respective parent or guardian.

The building had a toilet facility adjacent to the childcare room for the sole use of the children, therefore this for the most part negated the need for children to leave the room to use the large sanitary area that was shared with the national school. In the event of a child needing to use these facilities, a staff member accompanied the child on request.

All staff were suitably qualified, had extensive experience and the pre-school leader had over 26 years experience working directly with children. The child staff ratios exceeded the requirements for care needed under the Childcare Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016.