

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

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| <b>Identifier:</b> | TU2015WD079 |
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| <b>Name of Service:</b> | Stepping Stone Pre-school |
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| <b>Address of Service:</b> | Upper Piltown, Kinsale Beg, Youghal, Co. Waterford |
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| <b>Eircode:</b> | P36 C850 |
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| <b>Name of Registered Provider:</b> | Jane O'Sullivan |
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|                      |           |
|----------------------|-----------|
| <b>Service type:</b> | Sessional |
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| <b>Date of Inspection:</b> | 22/01/2024 |
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|-----------------------------------|----|----|----|----|
| <b>No of pre-school children:</b> | AM | 14 | PM | 16 |
|-----------------------------------|----|----|----|----|

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| <b>Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:</b> | Community Care Centre,<br>HSE Buildings,<br>Cork Road,<br>Waterford City. |
| <b>Inspection undertaken by:</b>                | M. Ryan   |
| <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).

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| <b>Conditions if applicable</b> | Not applicable |
|---------------------------------|----------------|

### Description of service

Stepping Stones Kinsalebeg is a privately owned sessional service. The service is located in a rural area and approximately eight kilometres from Youghal town on the border of Co Cork and Co Waterford. The service presently offers two sessions Monday to Friday with the Early Childhood Care and Education Scheme (ECCE) from 09:00hrs to 12:15hrs and 12:30hrs to 15:30hrs in the afternoon. The service operates from a purpose-built premises on the grounds of the registered provider's home. A secured outdoor play area is adjacent to the service.

### Staffing

The registered provider employs three childcare workers to work in the service, the registered provider is part of the staff compliment, and one childcare worker is employed under the Access and Inclusion Model Scheme.

### 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 under the following regulations;

Regulation 9 – Management and recruitment.

Regulation 11 - Staffing levels.

Regulation 19 - Health, welfare and development of child.

Regulation 25 - First aid.

Regulation 26 - Fire safety measures.

Regulation 28 – Insurance.

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
- (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-

- (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, as far as is practicable, that where a person has lived in a state other than the State for a period of longer than six 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

There were three staff working directly with the children present on the day of inspection and one of these staff was the registered provider.

- (1)
- (a) The registered provider was the designated person in charge. The service also had a named person who was able to deputise as required.
  - (b) At all times during the inspection the registered provider was on the premises.
  - (c) The registered provider had two services in the locality. The registered provider alternated between both services. There was documentation available that indicated the management structure in these services and identified the lines of authority and accountability in each of the services on the appropriate days.

(2)  
On review of the staff files, there was no change in the staff since the last inspection on 13 April 2021, and all staff files were compliant on review at the last inspection.

(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, and 8 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)  
In the morning session there were 14 children aged 3 to 5 years of age being cared for by 3 staff. In the afternoon session on the day of the inspection there were 16 children aged 2 years 10 months to 5 years of age being cared for by 3 staff.

(3)  
The staff: child ratios exceeded the requirements for sessional care needed under the Childcare Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016.

## 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.

The pre-school offered the ECCE scheme to a large rural hinterland in west county Waterford. Stepping Stones Kinsalebeg had two sessions, morning and afternoon. It was documented in the service's mission statement that the ethos of the service was to 'provide high quality care in a happy and relaxed atmosphere'. The registered provider had a second service in the locality (Stepping Stones Ardmore), that presently operated the ECCE scheme solely in the mornings. Some children changed settings for the second year of the programme.

On arrival at the service the inspector was warmly greeted, the atmosphere was relaxed and calm. Children were observed to be comfortable in their surroundings in the large pre-school room that was cosy and colourfully decorated. This room had bright floor covering and four south facing windows that provided plenty of sunshine and daylight which further enhanced the pleasant ambiance of the room.

The registered provider spoke about how young children learn best through play-based activities. The children were observed playing in small groups of their choice. Some were around the table with freshly made playdough while the staff sat with them encouraging conversations about the texture and colour of the playdough. Another small group were deeply engaged in the large well-resourced construction area with the availability of a variety of blocks and open-ended natural objects and materials.

It was further documented in the parents handbook that the service was committed to providing 'a positive, happy, secure environment where clear choices are given and where children are comfortable trying and trying again, and where respect for self and others is nurtured.' The commitment to the provision of a nurturing environment for children was evident in the comfortable relationships noted between the staff and children.

The interest areas both indoors and outdoors were well resourced and defined to meet the imaginative /role play and sensorial needs of the children. A large outdoor covering extended from the south facing aspect of the premises and covered almost half of the outdoor play area. Child-size, garden picnic tables and sand trays were positioned under the Perspex canopy, in the afternoon children were observed sitting and chatting at these tables and enjoying playing with the sand in the sand play trays.

The theme for the week for the morning group was birthdays which had emerged from one of the children having a new sibling. All of the children attending had a photograph of themselves as an infant on the birthday wall. Children proudly took turns to show off their picture to the inspector.

The children in the afternoon session were younger and attending for the first year of the scheme. These children were observed eating their lunch with the staff sitting at the tables enjoying conversations. The theme for the junior group was rainbow and children were observed being introduced to rainbow colours at their tabletop time as well as play items that had graduated rainbow colours.

The service kept folders of the children's work and photographs incorporating weekly observations by the staff with children's comments. It was noted that following the visit from An Garda Síochána one child had expressed an interest in wishing to be a Garda when she grew up so that she could put robbers in jail.

The registered provider explained that the pre-school had operated a curriculum plan based on children's emergent interests with upcoming celebrations and events. The registered provider explained that this necessitated planning through observing, listening, talking to and interacting with the children in order to be able to organise interesting and fun learning opportunities and experiences.

## 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 was documentation available to verify that all staff had current first aid responder training FAR.

(2)

(a) There was a suitably equipped wall mounted first aid bag in the service.

(b) The first aid bag was suitably accessible and available in the pre-school room.

## 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 record in writing of fire drills indicated that the last fire drill took place on the premises on the 18 January 2024.

(b) A record of the number, type and maintenance firefighting equipment and smoke alarms were maintained. It was recorded that fire equipment was last checked in August 2023 and the smoke alarms were last checked in October 2023.

(4)  
The fire evacuation procedure with details of the measures to be taken in the event of a fire were displayed on the notice board in the corridor.

### Part VI - Safety

#### Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

#### Compliance Information

The service was adequately insured for the provision of a sessional service and for up to 22 children at any given time. An insurance certificate was available and displayed with the expiry date of 27 March 2024.