

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015WH012			
Name of Service:	Magic Steps Ltd			
Address of Service:	37 Manorfield, Kinnefad, Co. Westmeath			
Eircode:	N91 CC91			
Name of Registered Provider:	Bernie Clynes			
Service type:	Full Day			
Date of Inspection:	31/07/2025			
No of pre-school children:	AM	21	PM	21
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate Primary Care Centre, Church Avenue, Tullamore Co Offaly R34K1W4			
Inspection undertaken by:	A Spain			
Title:	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).				
Conditions if applicable	Not applicable.			

Description of service

Magic Steps Ltd is a privately run full day care service located in a residential housing estate in Kinnegad, Co. Westmeath. The service cares for children in the age range 0 to 6 years and children currently in attendance are in the age range 1 to 6 years. The service is operational between the hours of 7.00am to 6.30pm Monday to Wednesday and 7.00am to 6.00pm Thursday and Friday. Rooms in use are at ground floor level and include a baby room, toddler room, two preschool rooms, a sleep room, sanitary accommodation for children and staff, a nappy changing room, a laundry area, a store room, an office and a kitchen. An outdoor area is provided at the back of the service.

Staffing

The service is currently staffed by nine staff members. A cook is also employed to work directly in the kitchen in the service. The registered provider does not work directly with the children in the service.

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 and safety. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under:

Regulation 9 – Management and recruitment,

Regulation 11 – Staffing levels,
Regulation 15 – Records of pre-school child,
Regulation 16 – Records in relation to pre-school service,
Regulation 19 – Health, welfare and development of child,
Regulation 20 – Facilities for rest and play,
Regulation 23 – Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child,
Regulation 25 – First aid,
Regulation 26 – Fire safety measures,
Regulation 27- Supervision,
Regulation 28 – Insurance.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 15 Records of pre-school child. The scope of the inspection included the rooms in use in the service and the outdoor play area.

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 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-

- (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.

(3) The procedures specified in paragraph (2) shall be carried out prior to any person being appointed, assigned or allowed access to or contact with a child attending the pre-school service.

(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 service has both a designated person in charge and a named person to deputise as required.

(b)

The named person to deputise was present in the service on arrival of the inspector and was present for the duration of the inspection. The designated person in charge arrived at the service during the course of the inspection.

(c)

Staff were observed to be familiar with their roles and responsibilities as they engaged in play activities with the children and looked after their care needs in the designated rooms assigned to work in.

(2)(a)(b)

Two written and validated references from past employers were held on file in respect of the registered provider and four staff members. Two written and validated references from reputable sources were held on file in respect of two staff members. A written and validated reference from a past employer and a written and validated reference from a reputable source were held on file in respect of the remaining four staff members.

(c)

Garda vetting disclosures were held on file in respect of the registered provider and the ten staff working in the service. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years in respect of the registered provider and ten staff members.

(d)

Police vetting was held on file in respect of one staff member who had lived outside of the state for over six consecutive months as an adult.

(3)

Records held on file confirmed that the necessary vetting procedures were conducted prior to staff working directly with the children.

(4)

Documented evidence was held on file to confirm that all nine staff working directly with the children held a major award in Early childhood Care and Education varying from level 5 to level 7 on the National Qualifications Framework.

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)

The baby room, preschool 1 and preschool 2 were open on the day of inspection.

An adequate number of adults worked and cared for the children present in the three playrooms which were open and in use on the day of inspection.

(2)

The adult to child ratio was maintained, evidenced by the following example observed on the day of inspection;

- One staff member cared for 5 children aged 1 to 2 years in the baby room.
- Two staff members cared for 12 children in the age range 3 to 5 years in Preschool 2.
- One staff member cared for 4 children in the age range 2 to 3 years in Preschool 1.

An additional staff member was available during both the morning and afternoon in the service to provide cover as necessary for breaks, settling children to sleep in the cot room and for nappy changing activities.

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)(b)

The inspector reviewed a sample of 6 children's record forms from preschool 2 care room. The necessary details in respect of (1)(a) to (h) were recorded in respect of the sample of records reviewed.

(3)(a)(b)(c)

The records referred to in paragraph (1) were open to inspection by a parent or guardian of a pre-school child in respect of the record relation to their child, an employee who was authorised by the registered provider and the inspector on the day of inspection.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 16 – Record in relation to pre-school service

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of the following information in relation to the service:

(c) details of the adult:child ratios in the service;

(k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.

Compliance Information

(1)(c)

A daily record of adult:child ratios was maintained in the children’s attendance books for the service.

(k)

The inspector reviewed a sample of 7 accidents and incidents recorded, dated from December 2024 to July 2025. The records included details of the accidents/incidents, remedial measures taken, and were signed by a staff member, service manager and parent. This was in keeping with the accident and incident policy reviewed in the service. A staff member was familiar with the procedure for recording accidents and incidents and notifying parents when asked about the process.

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)

Preschool 1.

Children were observed to enjoy the morning snack provided from home which comprised of sandwiches, crackers, fresh fruit and water to drink. Before dinner time in the room, a staff member sat with the children in the quiet area in the room and read a story, showing the children pictures from the storybook. Children were also

observed to enjoy playing with picture cards and sitting to stack and build with building blocks of different sizes and dimensions.

Baby room.

A staff member sat on a soft floor mat with the five children cared for in the room. The staff member was observed to care for and talk to the children as they played with a low-level timber house and soft toys on the floor. The staff member showed the children “transport” pictures in a book and read to the children. At nappy changing times, a staff member available to support the care rooms provided supervision to the room and was observed sitting with the children on the floor supporting them in their play whilst stacking soft building bricks. Notebooks were maintained in the room to record the children's daily routines, including feeding, sleep, and nappy changing patterns, as well as comments on their day for take-home at collection times.

Prior to being served their lunch the children were assisted to wash their hands. The children were observed eating pureed mashed potato, chicken and broccoli whilst seated at a low-level table on low level chairs.

Assistance was provided to children who required support with feeding. Following their lunch the children were placed into cots in the adjoining sleep room.

Preschool 2

A staff member played musical chairs with the children. Children were observed to enjoy playing games to music and movement in the room. The children were observed to wash their hands under supervision and sit for dinner with a staff member as they chatted to their friends and the staff member in a relaxed atmosphere. In the afternoon, the children enjoyed playing at the sand tray using shapes, spoons and containers to mould the soft sand.

Family walls were posted in the playrooms with pictures of the children from their home settings. In addition to daily handovers at take home times, an electronic communications application was in use to provide parents with pictures of activities the children engaged in and enjoyed. Artwork was taken home at the request of children and learning journals were maintained to depict the play and learning themes in the service for subsequent take home.

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 19 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 service had a range of play materials and toys that offered stimulation and provided for explorative and imaginative play. The playrooms were clean, pleasant and uncluttered.

Preschool 1.

Play equipment and materials were on open display on shelving and in low level containers for easy access by children. Bricks and blocks of different textures and materials, connecting toys and tools were provided in construction areas. Cars, lorries, a train and train track were provided in a transport area. Dolls, miniature figures with different skin textures and dolls houses were provided in a “small world” area. A range of puzzle, games and jigsaws were provided for tabletop activities. A cooker, cooking equipment and utensils, cot and dolls were located in a “small world” area.

Baby room.

The baby room was brightly decorated with pictures of the children, handprints and artwork undertaken by the children. Low level mirrors were wall mounted in “see me” areas. A range of sensory toys, animals, balls, soft building blocks, transport toys, play kitchens with food and utensils and soft toys were located at low level for children to move around freely and choose what to play with.

Preschool 2

Play equipment and materials were located in defined areas of interest and on low level shelving to encourage play activities as the children's interests emerged. Construction areas were provided with tool, shapes, vehicles to drive, building timbers and a range of connecting materials. The home corner was stocked with a kitchen, cooking equipment, food, cups, plates and dolls and prams for pretend play. The role play area had a low-level mirror, a dressing table, a chair and dress-up clothing.

Arts and crafts materials and paper were available in all three playrooms in the service.

(b)

Soft furnishing comprising of floor mats, cushions with books within easy reach of the children were provided in quiet areas in all playrooms in use in the service. The cot room off the baby room was provided with 5 standard cots for children to sleep in on demand. Low level beds were held in storage in a storeroom off the hallway for children to avail of sleep in playrooms as necessary.

(3)

The outdoor play area was safely and securely fenced in by the back wall of the premises and high-level timber fencing. There was direct access to the outdoor area from both preschool rooms 1 and 2 and from the toddler room which was not in use on the day of inspection. Colourful boots with planted flowers and model butterflies were observed to be mounted on timber walls painted in a variety of colours in the outdoor play areas. A concrete path provided a smooth surface for wheel along toys and trikes. Slides, a mud kitchen, a sand box and tyres to climb on were noted on the grass surface area to engage children in energetic play.

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 provided all meals for children present for part-time and full day care. Morning snack is provided by parents and guardians. A three week menu plan was available in the service. Dinner provided on the day of inspection comprised of mashed potatoes, chicken and broccoli in a cream sauce. Beakers of water were provided with dinner for children to take drinks. Tea on the day comprised of toasted ham or cheese sandwiches with fresh fruit. It was noted that meals provided to the children were in accordance with the menu plan for the day.

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 entrance to the service was secured on arrival and a doorbell was provided to facilitate access. A keypad lock was provided to facilitate staff access to the service. The glass panels at the entrance door allowed easy visibility of all approaching the service. Child proof locks were provided on the low-level presses and refrigerator door in the baby room. The hot water supply connected to the wash hand basins in the childrens sanitary accommodation was thermostatically controlled and was recorded at 40°C on the day of inspection. Cleaning agents and chemicals were stored on a high level windowsill and a high level shelf in the nappy changing room and in presses in the kitchen. A reserve supply of cleaning agents and chemicals was stored in a locked cabinet in the hallway. High level timber gates were provided at both the front and back open gable end of the premises to guard against both unauthorised access to the service from the front of the building and unsupervised exit by children from the outdoor area at the back of the service. A timber gate was provided to prevent children accessing the refuse storage area outside of the outdoor play area. The gas tank in the outdoor play area was surrounded by timber

fencing to prevent children's access when playing outdoors. The living accommodation at first floor level has a separate entrance outside of the service.

Infection Control:

The room floors and furnishings in the service were observed to be clean and well-maintained. Staff had responsibility for daily cleaning and completed cleaning checklists were available for the rooms, furniture, toys and the sanitary accommodation. Wash hand basins were provided in the three playrooms open on the day of inspection to assist with hand washing after messy play and before meals. Hop-ups, liquid soap, disposable paper towels, foot pedal operated bins and child friendly hand washing signage were observed at the wash hand basins in the childrens sanitary accommodation. The children's soothers in the baby room were stored in individually labelled containers in the refrigerator. Sheets and cellular blankets were laundered in the service and were individual to children at sleep times. Individual boxes with childrens labelled nappies, creams and wipes were held in storage in the nappy changing areas. The service had a pest control contract for vermin and pest control. The last visit to the service was recorded on the 30 May 2025.

Administration of Medication:

Temperature reducing medication was available in the service. A Record of prescribed medication administered to a child, the prescribed health care plan, staff signatures and parental authorisation to administer the medication was in place in respect of one child in attendance in the service.

Safe Sleep:

A sleep log was maintained to record sleep times, sleep checks, colour, position and breathing of sleeping children in the cot room in the service. A combination of opening windows, pulling down window blinds and use of an electronic air conditioning unit was in use on the day of inspection to maintain the room temperature of the sleep room at a recording of 20°C.

Fire Safety:

Fire exit doors at both the front and back of the service were clearly signposted. A fire assembly point was posted in the carpark at the front of the service.

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)
Three staff members with up to date First Aid Response (FAR) training with expiry dates of 20 January 2026, August 2026 and 9 October 2026 were available to the children attending the pre-school service.
- (2)(a)(b)
A first aid box was stored in a high shelf in the office, in a press in the baby room and wall mounted in the kitchen which were easily accessible to staff caring for children in attendance in 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)
The service maintained a record of fire drills conducted in the service. The last monthly fire drill was recorded on the 18 July 2025.
- (b)

The maintenance record for the fire fighting equipment located at the front and back door entrances and in the kitchen confirmed that an annual service was conducted on 9 April 2025. The maintenance record for the smoke alarm system confirmed that a service was conducted on 1 May 2025.

(4)

A notice of the procedure to be followed in the event of a fire was on display in the playrooms in the service.

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

On the day of inspection, children were observed to be supervised by both sight and sound by designated staff members assigned to the three rooms in use in the service. The availability of a staff member for relief cover throughout the day ensured adequate supervision of the children during mealtimes, nappy changing and when children were settled for sleep in the sleep room.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The service had insurance cover for a maximum of 45 children in daily attendance in a full day care service. Insurance cover was valid from the 28 March 2025 to the 27 March 2026.