

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015WH035
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Name of Service:	Steps Ahead Playschool
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Address of Service:	Cooksboro View, Cloughan, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath
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Eircode:	NI9 DP30
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Name of Registered Provider:	Mary Dunne
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	07/06/2023
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No of pre-school children:	AM	34	PM	NA
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Tusla, Child and Family Agency, SAP Office, St. Loman's Campus, Mullingar, Co Westmeath
Inspection undertaken by:	C. O'Connor Hughes
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
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Description of service

The service provides an Early Childhood Care and Education programme to children aged between 2 to 6 years. The service operates Monday to Friday from 09:30 to 13:00. The service is operated by an independent provider. The service is located in the grounds of the home of the registered provider and consists of a purpose-built facility and a prefabricated unit. Four interconnecting pre-school rooms are provided. An outdoor play area is located to front of the service. The outdoor play area to the rear of the service is not currently in use. Onsite parking facilities are available to the front of the service.

Staffing

The designated person in charge and three adults were working directly with the children on the 7 June 2023. The registered provider was not present on the day of the 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 inspections may also focus on other areas as required.

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,

(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 designated person in charge and a named person to deputise were available in the service.

(b)

The designated person in charge was present for the duration of the inspection.

(2)(a)(b)

Written validated references were available from a past employer and from a source other than a previous

employer in respect of all adults.

(c)

Garda Vetting disclosures were available in respect of all adults.

(d)

Police vetting was available in respect of one adult as they had lived outside the state for a period of longer than six consecutive months.

(3)

The procedures in respect (2)(a)(b)(c)(d) were carried out by the registered provider prior to the employment of all adults.

(4)

The adults held a major award at Level 5 to Level 6 in Early Childhood Care and Education 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.

Compliance Information

(1)

The minimum ratio of adults to children was maintained during the inspection.

(3)

There were thirty- four children attending the service supervised directly by four adults including the designated person in charge.

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.*

Compliance Information

(1)

A sampling process has been used and four child records were inspected. Information relating to (a)(b)(c)(d)(e)(f)(g)(h) and (i) was available in respect of the children attending the service.

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:

- (a) the name, position, qualifications and experience of the person in charge and of every other employee, unpaid worker and contractor;*
- (b) details of the class of service and the age profile of children for which the service is registered to provide services;*
- (c) details of the adult:child ratios in the service;*
- (d) the type of care or programme provided in the service;*
- (e) the facilities available;*
- (f) the opening hours and fees;*
- (h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis;*
- (i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;*
- (j) details of any medication administered to a pre-school child attending the service with signed parental consent;*
- (k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.*

Compliance Information

Information in respect of Regulation 16 (1)(a) to (g) was reviewed.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 17 – Information for parents

A registered provider shall ensure that a parent or guardian of a child proposing to attend the service is provided with the information referred to in subparagraphs (a) to (g) of Regulation 16(1).

Compliance Information

A parent information book was available for review and held information in respect of Regulation 16 (1)(a) to (g).

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 18 – Copy of Act etc.

A registered provider shall ensure that a copy of Part VIIA (inserted by section 92 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013 (No. 40 of 2013)) of the Act and of these Regulations is kept on the premises and the said copies shall be open to inspection on the premises by-

- (a) a parent or guardian of a child attending or proposing to attend the service,*
- (b) an employee, unpaid worker or contractor, and*
- (c) an authorised person.*

Compliance Information

A copy of the of Part V11A (inserted by section 92 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013 (No.40 of 2013)) of the Act and Regulations was available for inspection of (a)(b)(c).

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)

Children were observed to enjoy the morning session as they spent time playing in the indoor and outdoor environments supported by the staff. Children participated in practising for their graduation ceremony singing and performing actions and rhymes encouraged by staff. Transitions were handled smoothly as staff rang a bell to give notice of change from one activity to another. Children washed their hands before snack time supervised by staff. Staff sat with children as they enjoyed their healthy snack provided by parents. Conversations and interactions were observed between staff and children as they discussed their recent trip to a local farm. Snacks consisted of sandwiches, fruit, yoghurts with water to drink. Children were encouraged towards independence as they tidied up their lunch bags after eating. Children were observed to take a book, relax and read in the rest area after snack time. Staff were positive towards children evidenced by using their individual names, maintaining eye contact and giving positive praise on completion of activities. Good teamwork was observed amongst staff.

The pre-school rooms were laid out with tables and chairs. Toys and materials that were age and stage appropriate were accessible to children on low level shelving in the pre-school rooms. A home area, shop, construction and playhouse were noted.

The outdoor play area had new equipment in place since the last inspection on 8 June 2021. A large climbing frame with two slides, playhouse and climbing wall was noted. A large wooden bus, sand play area, water play, a climbing frame and a mud kitchen were available for children's use.

The designated person in charge stated partnership with parents was managed in the following ways; a verbal handover is given on collection, an open day for new children attending the service is held once a year, updates are sent to parents on a short messaging system (SMS), one to one meetings are held with parents as required. Artwork is given to parents on a monthly basis and the child's learning journal depicting their play and work activities are shared with parents at the end of the pre-school term.

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:

Entry to the service was secure to prevent unauthorised access and to ensure children's safety. The door was locked on the Inspector's arrival to the service. Access is gained by ringing the doorbell. Parents were observed to collect their children from the staff member at the gate entrance to the outdoor play area to the front of the service. The service met the necessary safety requirements in respect of the indoor environment, toys and equipment and the safe storage of cleaning agents.

Infection Control:

Children washed their hands before snacks and after toileting. The premises were visually clean. All toys and materials were easily cleanable. Cleaning schedules were available and reviewed. Warm running water, liquid soap and hand towels were available in the sanitary accommodation. Foot operated pedal bins were available in pre-school room and in the sanitary accommodation for the hygienic disposal of waste.

Fire Safety:

Emergency exits were unobstructed from the pre-school rooms. Fire evacuation plans were displayed in each pre-school room.

Outing:

The service undertook an outing to a local farm on the 6 June 2023. A risk assessment and outings policy were available for review.

Non-Compliance Information

Administration of Medication

There was no temperature reducing medication available in the service if a child had a high temperature. Parental consent was noted for the administration of medication to children. The services' administration of medication policy indicated that a temperature reducing medication will be given if a child presents with a high temperature with parental consent.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The registered provider stated the following corrective and preventive actions in her response;

Corrective and Preventive Action

Temperature reducing medication has been purchased for use as per the Steps Ahead Preschool medication policy.

The registered provider will ensure there is a supply of temperature reducing medication onsite at all times. A plan has been put in place to check stock regularly to ensure that in the event a child develops a temperature and following our policy there is medication to administer.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence submitted.

Summary Comment

Evidence submitted and reviewed by the Early Years Inspector met the Regulatory requirement.

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 adults had completed First Aid Response (FAR) training and were present in the service.

(2)(a)

The first aid box was available in an accessible and conspicuous location in the front entrance of the service.

(b)

A first aid box was available to children in the pre-school 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)

A written record for the completed monthly fire drills was available on the premises. The last fire drill was recorded as taking place on the 19 May 2023.

(b)

A record was available demonstrating the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms on the premises. The smoke alarms were serviced on the 15 January 2023.

(4)

A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire was displayed in a conspicuous position in the premises.

Non-Compliance Information

(1)(b)

An indate maintenance cert was not available for fire- fighting equipment. The fire- fighting equipment was last serviced on the 4 April 2022. It is acknowledged that the registered provider submitted a maintenance certificate for the fire- fighting equipment on the 17 June 2023.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The registered provider stated the following corrective and preventive actions in her response;

Corrective and Preventive Action

A reputable contractor has inspected and serviced the fire- fighting equipment and a certificate of proof has been received.

The registered provider will contact the contractor to service the fire- fighting equipment at least one month to ensure equipment is serviced before the expiry date.

Supporting documentation submitted

Fire maintenance certificate submitted.

Summary Comment

Evidence submitted and reviewed by the Early Years Inspector met the Regulatory requirement.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

There was evidence of current insurance cover for the number of children attending the service and the expiry date noted as 27 March 2024.