

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015WH041			
Name of Service:	Step by Step			
Address of Service:	29 College Vale, Irishtown, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath			
Eircode:	N91 Y363			
Name of Registered Provider:	Monica Cronin			
Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional			
Date of Inspection:	24/07/2024			
No of pre-school children:	AM	15	PM	15
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			

Description of service

The service is registered as a full day care service. The age range of children that can be enrolled in the service is 0 to 6 years of age. The service operates between the hours of 08:15 and 17:45 on a Monday to Friday basis. The Early Years' Service is located in an adapted two storey domestic dwelling. Three pre-school rooms, two sleep rooms, a breakout room, a kitchen and an office are provided. The third pre-school room on the first floor was closed for the summer period. An outdoor play area is attached to the rear of the service. The service is situated in a residential area on the outskirts of the town of Mullingar, County Westmeath.

Staffing

Four staff members were working directly with the children on the 24 July 2024. The registered provider arrived to the service shortly after the inspectors arrival, provided a support role in the service and was present for the closing meeting.

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.

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, deputy 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 designated person in charge and a named person to deputise were available as required.

(b)

The designated person in charge and a named person to deputise were present for the inspection.

(c)

There was a clear management structure in place in the service. Documentation detailed the roles and responsibilities of the staff working in the service.

Six staff files were reviewed including the registered provider.

The following was noted:

(2)(a)(b)

The required number of written validated references were available from past employers and from a source other than a past employer in respect of the five staff members.

There were two written references available in respect of the registered provider.

(c)

A Garda Vetting disclosure was available in respect of the staff members and the registered provider.

The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

- (d)
Police vetting was not required as no staff member had lived outside the state for a period of longer than six consecutive months.
- (3)
The registered provider ensured that all staff were vetted prior to commencing employment in the service.
- (4)
All staff members working directly with children attending the service and held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Levels 5 to 8 on the National Framework of Qualifications or an equivalent deemed by the Minister.

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.*
- (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)
The minimum ratio of adults to children was maintained during the inspection.

(2)

There were fifteen children attending the service supervised directly by five adults including the registered provider.

(8)(a)

The staff roster indicated that two adults are on the premises at all times.

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)

In a sample review of twelve child enrolment records 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

(1)

The service kept and maintained written records of information in relation to the service in accordance with Regulation 16 (1) (a)(b) (c) (d) (e) (f) (h) (i) (j)and (k).

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

Information was available for parents in the service in respect of Regulation 16(1) (a) to (g) in a parent handbook emailed to parents at the start of the pre-school term.

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 by (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)

Toddler Room

There was a calm and happy atmosphere noted in the toddler room. The staff member was positive, caring towards children and was familiar with each child and their daily routine. The staff member used individual names, maintained eye contact and sat talking and singing with children. Nappy changing was carried out regularly and as needed. Good communication was observed between the staff member and child during nappy changing.

At approximately 12:00, the young children enjoyed their main meal of chicken curry, sweetcorn and rice sitting with their siblings in the pre-school room. Children were encouraged to feed themselves and staff assisted the children as required. Staff members ate the main meal with the children. The opportunity to rest and sleep was offered to children after their main meal.

The toddler room was bright and colourful with children's artwork and family photographs displayed in the room. Age and stage appropriate toys and materials were accessible to children on low level shelving. Materials were available to children included musical instruments bricks, blocks, animals, jigsaws, dolls and books. A toy kitchen, a small table with chairs and a cosy rest area was noted. Children were observed to play with bricks, explore their environment and rest on the soft matting provided.

Pre-school room

Children were independent with hand washing and toileting supervised by staff members and assisted as required. At approximately 10:20, a snack of rice cakes, cheese and yoghurt with water to drink was offered to children. Some children bring their own lunches provided by the parents to the service. A little helper system was in place as a child was observed to give drinks to their peers.

A range of developmentally appropriate experiences to meet children's learning needs was available in the pre-school room. Children enjoyed the various play opportunities and small group outdoor play time supervised by staff members. Children were happily engaged in story time, creative and sensory play.

There is a minimal turnover of staff in the service thus helping to promote the emotional security for the children attending the service. Upset children were comforted and reassured by staff members in a calm and caring manner. Positive redirection strategies were observed and used as required by staff members. Good teamwork was observed amongst staff members.

The service works in partnership with parents, a verbal handover is given at drop off and collection. Information updates and photographs are shared with parents via electronic email. One to one telephone calls are made to parents as necessary.

Evidence indicated that the curriculum planning that supported the Early Childhood Curriculum framework was implemented.

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)

Suitable play equipment was provided indoors and outdoors which included toys and equipment for construction, tabletop activities, arts and crafts, sensory play and home corners.

(b)
Two separate sleep rooms were provided for children to rest and sleep adjacent to the toddler room and in the pre-school room. Seven standard cots were available in both sleep rooms. Rest areas were noted in the toddler and pre-school room for children to rest and relax.

(3)(a)
The outdoor play areas were safe and secure surrounded by high walls. An absorbent surface was noted. Toys and equipment included a playhouse, a toy kitchen, muddy play, bicycles, cars and scooters. A grass area was noted with a sheltered area for children's use.

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 door to the service was secure to ensure the safety of the children within the service. The service is accessed through a bell to the reception area 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:

The premises were visually clean. All toys and materials were easily cleanable. Cleaning schedules were available and reviewed. Warm water, paper hand towel and liquid soap was available in the sanitary accommodation. The water temperature recorded at the wash hand basins was 33 degrees Celsius.

Children were observed to wash their hands before snacks and after using the toilet. The nappy changing procedure observed was carried out as per the services' nappy changing procedure.

Foot operated pedal bins were available in the sanitary accommodation and in the toddler and pre-school room for the hygienic disposal of waste.

Natural and mechanical ventilation was available through openable windows in the toddler room, pre-school room, in the sanitary accommodation and the nappy changing room.

Waterproof mattress covers were noted on the cot mattresses in both sleep rooms.

Soothers were stored correctly in individual containers for young children.

A refrigerator was available in the toddler room for perishable foods. The temperature was recorded at 4 degrees Celsius by the service.

Administration of Medication:

Temperature reducing medication was available in the service if a child presented with a high temperature and stored safely. Medication was stored correctly in the service.

Safe Sleep:

A record of the colour, position and breathing of sleeping children was noted in a sleep log.

The environmental temperature of the sleep rooms was recorded at 20 degrees Celsius.

Fire Safety:

Fire exit routes were unobstructed and a fire assembly point was noted to the front of the service.

Emergency evacuation plans were noted in the toddler and the pre-school rooms.

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)

Two adults were qualified in First Aid response (FAR) and available on the premises during the hours of operation. Two adults held a paediatric first aid qualification.

(2)(a)

A first aid box was available in the office.

(b)

A first aid box was accessible 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 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 written record for the completed monthly fire drills was available on the premises. The last fire drill was recorded as taking place on the 12 June 2024.

(b)

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

(4)

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

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. The expiry date noted was the 27 March 2025.

Part IX - Inspection and Enforcement

Regulation 33 – Furnishing of information to agency

A registered provider shall furnish the Agency with such information as the Agency may reasonably require for the purpose of enforcing and executing these Regulations and the information shall be in such form, if any, as may be specified by the Agency.

Compliance Information

The registered provider furnished the required information during the inspection.