

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

<b>TUSLA Identifier:</b>	TU2015WW085
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<b>Name of Service:</b>	Stepping Stones Pre-school
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<b>Address of Service:</b>	Milltown South, Ashford, Co. Wicklow
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<b>Eircode:</b>	A67 RY22
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<b>Name of Registered Provider:</b>	Amanda Hatton
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<b>Service type:</b>	Sessional
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<b>Date of Inspection:</b>	18/09/2024
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<b>No of pre-school children:</b>	AM	24	PM	N/A
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<b>Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:</b>	Tusla Child and Family Agency First Floor Trinity Building IDA Business Park Southern Cross Road Bray Co. Wicklow
<b>Inspection undertaken by:</b>	H. Bourke
<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).

<b>Conditions if applicable</b>	Not applicable
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### Description of service

This private sessional service was first established in 2009 and operates from a single storey, purpose-built facility located on the grounds of the registered provider's home. The premises consists of two pre-school rooms, has a sanitary area and a large entrance hall. There is a large enclosed outdoor area to the side of the premises which the children have access to on a daily basis.

### Staffing

There are four staff employed in the service and three adults were present on the day of inspection and this included the registered provider. The service operates an Early Childhood and Education Scheme (ECE) service from 09.00 hrs to 12.30 hrs for 38 weeks of the year.

### 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/ 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, 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.*

*(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 registered provider was the designated person in charge of operating the service and there was a named staff member who was able to deputise as required.

(b)

The registered provider was on the premises at the time of arrival of the inspector and remained on the premises for the duration of the inspection.

(c)

There was a clear management structure in place on the day of inspection.

(2)(a)

Written references were available from past employers in respect four staff members.

(b)

Not applicable as all references were from past employers.

(c)

The required three-year Garda vetting disclosures were available in respect of four staff members.

(d)

Police vetting was not required as no adult had lived outside the State for a period of longer than six consecutive months since turning eighteen years of age.

(4)

All adults held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 or higher on the National Framework for 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.*

*(8) Without prejudice to paragraphs (2) to (7)-*

*(c) a registered provider of a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that, where the person in charge operates the service single-handedly, a second person familiar with the operation of the service and in a position to provide assistance to the person in charge in operating the service is, at all times, within close distance of the service and available to attend the service to assist the person in charge in the event of an emergency.*

#### Compliance Information

(1)  
Throughout the inspection there were an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the pre-school service.

(3)  
The correct adult/child ratio was maintained at all times. There were three adults employed and present with twenty-four children on the day of inspection.

(8)(c)  
There were two adults on the premises at all times. The registered provider does not operate the service singlehandedly.

## 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;*

*(h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis;*

*(i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;*

*(3) A record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection on the premises, and the documents and records referred to in paragraph (2)(a) shall be open to inspection whether on the premises or elsewhere, by an authorised person.*

### Compliance Information

(1)(a)

There were Curriculum Vitae available for four staff members on the day of inspection.

(h)

There were details of attendance for each child to the playschool recorded on a daily basis.

(i)

There were records available to demonstrate the staff roster on a daily basis.

(3)

The records referred to in paragraph (1) were open to inspection on the premises by an authorised person.

### 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 main door to the playgroup was securely locked on arrival of the inspector to the service.
- Documentary evidence was available of daily risk assessments being carried out in the service.
- All toys were in good condition and indoor equipment was suitable, age appropriate and in good working order.
- The care room had direct access to the outdoor area, that was suitable and secure.
- All cleaning products were stored safely out of the reach of children.
- The emergency exit route in the service room was free from obstruction and clearly marked.

##### Infection Control:

- There was a separate sanitary area available to the children. There was warm running water, liquid soap and paper towels available.
- A foot pedal bin was available in the sanitary area for the safe disposal of used paper towels.
- Table cleaning was observed before and after snack time.
- Hand washing by adults and children was observed before snacks, after using the toilet and outdoor play.
- A cleaning schedule was present and maintained in the care room.

##### Fire Safety:

There was evidence that fire drills had taken place within the service and there was a service record for the fire equipment and smoke alarm system dated September 2023.

#### Non-Compliance Information

##### General Safety:

1. The climbing frame and slide structure located in the garden was in need of repair. All access points to the climbing frame showed visible signs of wood rotting and fixed screws being exposed. In addition, the climbing handles at one access point were loose as the wood around them was degrading and in need of replacing. This could pose an injury risk to children and was noted on the last inspection.
2. A set of climbing steps into an outdoor shed showed clear signs of being cracked and loose. This could pose a risk of injury to a child.

## Action submitted by the Registered Provider

### Corrective & Preventive Action

#### General Safety:

1. The climbing frame has been sanded and support boards have been attached. A more thorough survey of the wood will be carried out in future.
2. The climbing area has totally been replaced. Assessment of the climbing steps will be incorporated into the perimeter check list.

### Supporting documentation submitted

#### General Safety:

Photographic evidence of repairs to the climbing frame and climbing steps were submitted with the CAPA response.

### Summary Comment

The non-compliances found on the day of inspection in relation to Regulation 23 General Safety have been addressed and will be reviewed on next inspection.

## Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

### Regulation 29 - Premises

*A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-*

- (a) of sound and stable structure,*
- (b) safe and secure,*
- (c) kept adequately lit, heated and ventilated*
- (d) cleaned, maintained and repaired, as required, and*
- (e) equipped with adequate and suitable sanitary facilities.*

### Compliance Information

(a)

The pre-school appeared to be of a sound and stable structure.

(b)

The premises was safe and secure.

(c)

There was adequate lighting, heating and ventilation in the care rooms.

(e)

There pre-school had suitable sanitary facilities for the children attending the service.

### Non-Compliance Information

(d)

The playhouse located in the large care room was in need of upgrading. There were visible signs of chipped and flaking paint in addition to the entire structure needing to be cleaned and repainted.

### Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

#### Corrective and Preventive Action

(d)

The playhouse has been sanded and painted. The painting of the playhouse will be incorporated into the yearly painting of the school.

#### Supporting documentation submitted

(d)

Photographic evidence of the playhouse having been fully repainted was submitted with the CAPA response.

### Summary Comment

The non-compliance found on the day of inspection in relation to Regulation 29 (d) has been addressed and will be reviewed on next inspection.