

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

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| <b>TUSLA Identifier:</b> | TU2017TY505 |
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| <b>Name of Service:</b> | First Steps (Little Learners) |
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| <b>Address of Service:</b> | Sacred Heart Primary School, New Line Road, Roscrea, Co Tipperary |
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| <b>Eircode:</b> | E53 RX77 |
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| <b>Name of Registered Provider:</b> | Michael Murray |
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| <b>Service type:</b> | Full Day |
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| <b>Date of Inspection:</b> | 10/11/2025 |
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| <b>No of pre-school children:</b> | AM | 19 | PM | 13 |
|-----------------------------------|----|----|----|----|

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| <b>Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:</b> | North Tipperary Civic Offices, Limerick Road, Nenagh, Co Tipperary |
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| <b>Inspection undertaken by:</b> | L McGeeney |
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| <b>Title:</b> | Early Years Inspector |
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### 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> | N/A |
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### Description of service

This community run full day care service was established in 2017 to provide care and education to children aged between 3 and 6 years old. A registered school age care service is also provided.

The service operates Monday – Friday, 9am – 3.30pm for 48 weeks of the year. This includes a daily three-hour sessional service from 9am – 12pm that is funded under the early childhood care and education scheme (ECCE) for eligible children and runs for 38 weeks of the year.

The service is operated from two rooms in the Sacred Heart Primary School in Roscrea in North Tipperary: one room is used for the pre-school service and the other for the school age care service. The children have access to the pre-school room with its own sanitary accommodation facilities, an enclosed outdoor play area that is shared with the ASD unit in the school and timetabled use of the school hall for indoor physical play opportunities.

This is one of two services operated in the town of Roscrea by North Tipperary Development Company (NTDC).

### Staffing

The registered provider is the CEO of NTDC and does not work in the service. The service manager is the person in charge on a daily basis. There are a total of four staff who work with the children in the service each day, including staff employed under the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM). All staff who work with the children hold recognised qualifications in early childhood care and development.

### 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.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9(1)(2)(4), 11(1)(2)(4)(8), 15(1)(3), 16(1)(3), 19(1)(b), 23, 25(1)(2) and 28.

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*

*(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 service manager was the designated person in charge and there was a named person who could deputise for her.

(b) The designated person in charge or her deputy were present in the service while it was in operation.

(2) Following a review of previous inspection information, information available on inspection and discussion with the person in charge it was determined that of the four staff employed in the service, all staff members were employed at the time of the previous inspection in March 2023. The staff files for the four staff and the registered provider were reviewed as part of the inspection process.

(a) Two written and validated references were available for each staff member working in the service.

(b) Where past employer references were not available, there were references from sources such as previous schools and colleges.

(c) Garda vetting was available on file for each staff member working in the service and for the registered provider. Garda vetting had been renewed, in compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) Police vetting documentation was available in respect of the staff who had lived outside of the state for a period of six consecutive months or longer.

(4) The staff held recognised qualifications in early childhood care and education at levels 5 or 6 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.*

*(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.*

*(4) Subject to paragraph (5), where a registered provider contemporaneously provides-*

*(a) a sessional pre-school service, and*

*(b) a full day care service or a part-time day care service, or both, the minimum ratio of adults to children applicable for the duration of the sessional pre-school service in respect of the children attending that service shall be the ratio specified in paragraph (3).*

*(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) There were 4 staff working directly with 19 children aged between 3 and 5 years old on the morning of the inspection. At 12.30pm there were 3 staff working directly with 14 children who attended on a part-time or full day care basis.

(2) The adult to child ratios were maintained within the requirements throughout the day.

(4) The adult to child ratios were maintained within the requirements at all times, including when the ratios changed from the morning session when the ratio was 1:11, to the afternoon, when the ratio reverted to 1:8.

(8)(a) There were at least two staff present in the service at all times while it was in operation.

### 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-*  
*(c) an authorised person.*

### Compliance Information

There were 22 registration forms available in the service, one for each of the children enrolled in the service. The registration forms were reviewed as part of the inspection process:

- (1) The registration forms contained the required information as detailed under parts (a) – (i) of this regulation.
- (3)(c) The registration forms were available in the service and open to inspection by an authorised person.

### 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;*
- (g) the policies, procedures and statements the service is required to maintain in accordance with Regulation 10;*
- (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.*

*(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) The records required to be maintained in the service as detailed under parts (a)-(k) of this regulation were available in the service.

(3) The records were available on the premises and were open to inspection by an authorised person.

### 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) The following practices were observed on the day of inspection which supported the health, welfare and development of the children:

The children enjoyed freedom of movement and freedom of choice within the activity room. The room was set up in a number of defined interest areas, each area was spacious and allowed several children to engage in the same type of activity at the same time. For example, several children were engaged in imaginative play in the home corner, other children were in the cosy corner/library and several children were engaged in table-top activities such as play dough, drawing or manipulative play.

The staff were available to the children to engage in small group work, one to one instruction or to support the children according to their individual needs. The staff were observed to respond to the children's interests and needs, often anticipating what the children wanted before they expressed it, demonstrating their knowledge of and interest in each child in their care.

Staff were observed to be patient, kind and encouraging of the children, giving praise for their behaviour or mastery of a task. For example children got a 'high five' or were told 'good job' or 'excellent job' when they presented their work to the staff. Staff were observed to break down instructions so that the children could clearly understand them and also gave children choices by asking 'would you like to do that?'

Staff reminded the children about hand washing at appropriate times during the day and were available to supervise and assist the children who needed help. The sanitary accommodation areas which included hand washing sinks were located in the room which supported good supervision of hand washing.

The children sat and ate together at mealtimes. At dinner time the children had a choice of what was placed on their plate. The food available for dinner on the day of inspection was bolognaise sauce, pasta, mashed potato and gravy.

### 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 through a door at the side of the school that was only used by those accessing the service or the ASD unit. The door from the school corridor into the pre-school room was kept secured to ensure that children could not leave the room unsupervised and unauthorised persons could not enter the room without the consent or knowledge of the staff.

Hot water for hand washing was thermostatically controlled not to exceed 43°C. On the day of inspection the hot water was 38.8°C.

The staff used a kettle to boil water for making instant gravy at dinnertime. The children were seated at their tables during this time and were not near the kettle. The water was discarded and the kettle stored out of reach when not in use.

##### Infection control:

The service had an infection control policy. Hand washing was carried out by children and staff at appropriate times during the day such as before eating, after messy play and after using the toilet or tissues.

Toys that children put in their mouths as part of play such as play foods were washed in a sterilising solution at the end of the day.

##### Administration of medication:

The service had a policy on the administration of medication. Signed parental consent was sought prior to any medication being given to a child.

##### Safe sleep:

Sleep mats were available if children required a sleep during the day, though most of the children had grown out of daytime sleeps.

If children required a sleep they would sleep in the room where the staff could supervise them.

##### Fire safety:

Fire escape routes were kept clear of obstruction.

## 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 were three staff present on the day of inspection who held current certification in first aid response (FAR), valid until 2026.

(2)(a) There was a suitably equipped first aid box available in the service.

(b) The first aid box was available if required by a child attending the service.

## Part VI - Safety

### Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

### Compliance Information

The service had current insurance cover for a full day care service valid until 27 March 2026.