

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2017WD502
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Name of Service:	Stepping Stones Pre-School
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Address of Service:	Farrangarret, Ardmore, Co. Waterford
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Eircode:	P36 PP28
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Name of Registered Provider:	Jane O'Sullivan
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date(s) of Inspection:	16/09/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	22	PM	n/a
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Community Care Centre, Cork Road, Waterford City
Inspection undertaken by:	A. Bradshaw
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

Stepping Stones Preschool is based in a log cabin on the outskirts of Ardmore village. It is one of two services operated by the registered provider. The service is registered to operate from 09:10 to 12:20 and 12:30 to 15:30, but currently only runs a morning session. The service cares for up to 22 children aged 2 to 6 years during the school term.

The sanitary facilities and office are located adjacent to the care room, and the care room has direct access to the outdoor area.

Staffing

The registered provider employs two care staff. The registered provider does not work with the children but is available for support if required. All care staff held a recognised qualification in Early Childhood Care and Education, or an equivalent qualification, as listed on the National Framework of Qualifications.

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, safety/ premises and facilities.

The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

Regulation 9: Management and Recruitment

Regulation 11: Staffing Levels

Regulation 15: Record of a Pre-School Child

Regulation 16: Record in relation to a Pre-school Service

Regulation 20: Facilities for rest and play

Regulation 25: First Aid

Regulation 26: Fire Safety Measures

Regulation 28: Insurance

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under:

- Regulation 15: Record of a Pre-School Child (1)
- Regulation 16 Record in relation to pre-school service (h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis; (i) details of staff rosters daily and (k) details of any accident, injury, incident involving a pre-school child attending the service

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, 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.

(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) There was a named person in charge and a deputy available to deputise as required. The registered provider arrived on site during the inspection.
- (b) The person in charge and the deputy were present on the premises on the day of the inspection. The registered provider stated that the staff work the same hours each day, and the sign-in sheet confirmed this.
- (c) The line management structure was evident during the inspection.

(2)

The inspector reviewed the files of the three staff, including the registered provider.

- (a)(b) Validated references were available to the inspector.

- (c) A Garda vetting disclosure was available on file in respect of the staff. The service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
- (d) Documents available demonstrated that police vetting was required for one staff member, and this was available on the day of the inspection.
- (4) There was evidence that staff working directly with the children had attained 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.

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) An adequate number of staff were working with the children on day of inspection.
- (3) The minimum ratio of adults to children was adhered to during inspection. Two staff members were working directly with 22 children in the morning. The registered provider was available to provide support where required.

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.*

Non-Compliance Information

The inspector reviewed a sample of 12 children's record forms; of these, 5 did not include the required information. For example, one form did not include the child's full name, and five did not have the child's start date.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The registered provider stated that all forms have been updated and staff have been made aware of the requirements that all forms must be completed correctly. The room leader will take responsibility of checking forms and the registered provider will review this.

Supporting documentation submitted

- A copy of the updated policy
- A copy of the message sent to all staff

Summary Comment

The action submitted by the registered provider has addressed the non-compliance identified on 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:

- (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.*

Compliance Information

(a) – (i) The information required in this regulation was available to the inspector. Details referred to from (a) to (i) were included in the service policies, the parental handbook and the staff files.

(j) Through discussion with the staff, it was stated that they do not administer medication unless it is an emergency, in line with the service policy. Blank medication administration forms were available in the service if required.

(i) A sample of five accident and incident forms was reviewed by the inspector and included the required details.

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.

(2) A registered provider-

(a) of a full day care service, a part-time day care service, a sessional preschool service or a childminding service that is registered for the first time on or after 30 June 2016 shall ensure that a suitable, safe and secure outdoor space to which the preschool children attending the service have access on a daily basis is provided on the premises.

Compliance Information

(1)(a)(b)

The layout of the room allowed children the space to move around and choose their activity. The room had areas of interest which were defined with the use of furniture and floor coverings. For example, the room had the following equipment: dress-up clothes, a play kitchen with accessories, a library with a wide variety of books, a farming scene, a large floor area for construction, and a fire station.

The tabletop activities were attractively displayed and available to the children on low shelving. Some examples were threading, construction, and connecting materials.

The equipment and toys were stored on low-level shelving and were accessible to the children. There were sufficient tables and chairs to accommodate children to sit and eat their snack or work independently with tabletop materials.

The library and cosy area were situated away from the main play area and were furnished with a large rug and soft couches.

(2)(a)

The care room has direct access to a large, enclosed grassed area at the rear of the building. There were facilities for water and sand play and a pebble pit for digging. There was a solid climbing structure for balance and gross motor movement.

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) The registered provider has ensured that a person trained in first aid was available to the children at all times.

The registered provider stated that they are due to complete a refresher course in the coming weeks.

(2) A suitably equipped first aid box was stored in an easily accessible and conspicuous position in the office.

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 registered provider ensured that fire drills were completed monthly. The last fire drill was recorded on 11 September 2025.

(b) Evidence reviewed demonstrated that the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms were last serviced in September 2025.

(4) The notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire was displayed in the main care room.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The service was insured for a maximum of 22 children on a sessional basis. The expiry date of this insurance was 27 March 2026.