

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2021KE001
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Name of Service:	Churchtown Stepping Stones Preschool & After School
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Address of Service:	Castlemitchell, Churchtown, Athy, Co. Kildare
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Eircode:	R14 H248
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Name of Registered Provider:	Linda Byrne, Lorraine Morrin
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	14/01/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	18	PM	N/A
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate Child and Family Agency Suite 7 Vista Primary Care Centre Ballymore Eustace Road Naas, Co. Kildare W91 X38W
Inspection undertaken by:	F. Maher, LA. Webster
Title:	Early Years Inspectors

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

This private service offers sessional care and education to children between the ages of 2-6 years old. The service opens Monday-Friday from 09:00am-12:00hrs for 38 weeks of the pre-school year.

The service is also registered to provide school age childcare.

The service operates from a modular unit in the village of Churchtown adjacent to the local community building and is approximately 4km from Athy. Outdoor play facilities are located to the front of the pre-school.

Staffing

There were four adults present in the service and working directly with the children on the day of inspection, this included both registered providers.

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 and safety. 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.

Additional Information

1. A written immediate action notice under Regulation 23 – Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child was issued to the registered provider on 14 January 2025.
2. A written response was submitted by the registered provider on 15 January 2025 outlining the measures taken to address the immediate concern, see body of report for details.

Acknowledgments

The inspectors wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered providers 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),(b)

There was a designated person in charge and a named person to deputise as required.

The records of four staff members employed and present in the service including the registered providers were reviewed.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all employed staff members.

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 in a state other than the State for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months.

(4)

Four members of staff employed and who work directly with the children whose records were reviewed held a major award at Level 5 or higher in Early Childhood Care and Education on the National Qualifications Framework.

Non-Compliance Information

(2)(a),(b)

It is acknowledged that eight written past employer references or references from a reputable source, in the absence of a past employer, were available in respect of the four adults whose files were reviewed, however, there was no documentary or written evidence that these eight references had been verified.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

All eight referees were contacted at the time of hiring; however the paperwork went astray, a second call was put in to verify.

Going forward the registered providers' state that they will ensure calls are made and a copy is kept on file to ensure back up.

Supporting documentation submitted

Documents x 8

Summary Comment

The requirement for Regulation 9(2)(a)(b) has been met.

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)
There were 18 children attending the service being supervised directly by 4 staff members during the inspection.

(3)
The minimum ratio of adults to children was adhered to during the day as specified in column (3) of Part 2 of Schedule 6.

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.

(4) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing referred to in paragraph (1) is retained for a period of 2 years from the date on which the child to whom it relates ceases to attend the service.

Compliance Information

(1)(a)-(i)

Ten child records were assessed.

Information with the relevant written details were outlined in (a), (c), (d), (e), (f), (g) and (i) of the regulation.

(3)(c)

All child records were available for inspection.

(4)

The registered provider advised all records are retained for the required period.

Non-Compliance Information

(1)(b)

Eight of the ten records reviewed had not recorded the date the children commenced in the service.

(h)

Three of the ten records reviewed had no record of the children's immunisation status.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective Action

(1)(b) All books have been updated with start and finish date.

(h) From the 3 records of children only 1 was required to be completed.

Preventive Action

To ensure this does not happen again one staff member will look after the registration forms to ensure all information is filled in and if not filled, they can make a note as to why.

Supporting documentation submitted

Document x 1

Summary Comment

Following review by the inspector of the stated actions and evidence submitted the non-compliances identified under Regulation 16(1)(b)(h) have been adequately addressed.

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 staff members advised they supervise the children during snack time and immediately cut/halve any foods that have the potential risk of choking. Staff were also aware of the danger posed by beaded necklaces and advised they would immediately remove them if a child was observed wearing these items.

All cleaning equipment was stored safely and out of reach of the children.

Infection Control:

Thermostatically controlled hot water, liquid hand soap and paper hand towel, hygienically dispensed from wall mounted units in the sanitary area were readily available for hygienic hand washing and drying.

Children were observed washing their hands on arrival in from the outside play area and before eating their snack.

Foot pedal operated bins were provided for the disposal of used paper towel and waste.

A cleaning record was in place and the pre-school room and sanitary areas were maintained in a clean and hygienic condition.

Administration of Medication:

Medication was not given at the time of the inspection; written parental consent was available should medication be required to be administered to a child. The staff members were familiar with the practices required for the administration of medication to a child attending the service.

Fire Safety:

Monthly fire drills had been carried out and staff members were familiar with fire safety evacuation procedures from the service.

Outing:

Parental consent is required for any outing that takes place in the service; this was advised by the staff member in conversation with the inspector.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. The main entrance door and internal pre-school room door to the service were found unsecured on two occasions by the inspectors as follows:
 - At 09:40am and 11:48am

It is acknowledged both doors were immediately secured when it was brought to the attention of the registered provider by the inspector at 09:40am, however, as outlined, both doors were found unsecured at 11:48am. This was a risk for unauthorised persons to gain entry to the service; an immediate action notice was issued 14 January 2025.
2. A large metal nail was observed protruding from the ground at the edge of the stone wall in the play area; this posed a risk of injury to a child when playing in this area.
3. Several gaps were observed between the rubber tiles on part of the play area and posed a potential trip hazard to staff and children.
4. Daily indoor and outdoor risk assessments were not being completed to identify and manage the risks of any observed hazards in the service.

Infection Control:

5. The nappy change mat and unlidged box with nappy change supplies were observed stored on the floor of the sanitary area; this posed a risk of cross infection.

6. There were no single use disposable plastic aprons available for hygienic nappy changing procedures.

Fire Safety:

7. There was no signage indicating the fire exits in the pre-school.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective Action

General Safety:

1. Following the inspection, we spoke to the staff explaining the importance of keeping the door locked at all times and going forward as part of the roster there will be a member of staff that will be given the job to ensure the door is locked. Signs are put up around the school at the front door, on the door coming into the classroom and at the staff sink.
2. The nail was immediately removed on the day of inspection and the rest of the yard was inspected to ensure there was no other nails to be found.
3. The rubber tiles were power washed and placed back in place to make it easier to maintain, it was added to the risk assessment/check list to ensure it is looked at daily and all tiles are in place at all times.
4. We have drawn up a daily risk assessment/check list for staff to ensure all areas of indoor and outdoor risks or hazards are identified and dealt with in the morning at 8am before playschool.

Preventive Action

1. This has been added to the risk assessment.
2. Going forward any work that is being carried out will be inspected to ensure no hazards are left behind.
3. Each day the tiles will be maintained, and we have a regular booking for maintenance of tiles.
4. Going forward we will review risk assessment regularly.

Infection Control:

Corrective Action

5. The nappy changing mat now has a stand and is always covered. The nappy changing supplies now has a box with a lid.
6. Disposable plastic aprons were purchased and put in the nappy changing supply box.

Preventive Action

5. The cover will be replaced regularly, and the mat is sterilised daily.
6. We will reorder aprons as soon as we start to run low.

Fire safety:

Corrective Action

7. Signage was placed at the fire exit doors; the fire specialist placed all signage when out to visit.

Preventive Action

7. On our annual visit any damaged signage will be replaced.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

Document x 1

Photographs X 2

Infection Control:

Photographs X 4

Fire safety:

Photograph X 1

Summary Comment

Following review by the inspector of the stated actions and the prompt response received to the immediate action notice issued and evidence submitted the non-compliances identified under Regulation 23 have been adequately addressed.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 24 - Checking in and out and record of attendance

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that each pre-school child attending the service is checked in and out of the service by an employee or an unpaid worker.

(2) Where there are more than 15 children attending a pre-school service in a drop-in centre, the registered provider shall ensure that one employee or unpaid worker is assigned responsibility for the checking in and out of children.

(3) A registered provider shall ensure that-

(a) no person other than-

(i) pre-school child attending the service,

(ii) a person dropping or collecting such a child,

(iii) an employee, or

(iv) an unpaid worker, can enter the premises with out his or her entry being approved by an employee, and

(b) a daily record in writing is kept of the entry on the premises of any such person.

(4) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing referred to in paragraph (3)(b) is retained for a period of one year from the date to which it relates.

Compliance Information

(1)
The registered provider ensured that each child was checked in and out of the service. This was confirmed by the written attendance records maintained in the pre-school room.

(2)
Not applicable as this was not a drop-in service.

(3) (a),(b)
The person in charge ensured that any person entering the service was approved and a record in writing was maintained.

(4)
The registered provider advised all records are retained for the required periods of time.

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 staff members present were trained in in first aid response (FAR) and were immediately available to the children attending the service.

(2)(a)
The first aid equipment was safely stored, in a conspicuous position in the pre-school room.

(b) A suitably equipped first aid box for children was available at all times to the adults caring for the children attending the 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 record in writing was kept of all fire drills that took place in the premises. The last recorded fire drill was dated 14 May 2024.
- (b) There were records available detailing the maintenance of the firefighting equipment in the service dated December 2024.

Non-Compliance Information

- (b) There was no documentary evidence available for the maintenance of the smoke/fire detection system in the pre-school.
- (4) There was an absence of a notice detailing the procedures to be followed in the event of fire.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective Action

- (b) The smoke detectors are tested and certified.
- (4) Written procedures are now in place

Preventive Action

- (b) An annual visit is scheduled.
- (4) We will review these procedures yearly and ensure they are in a visible place.

Supporting documentation submitted

- Document X 1
Photographs X 2

Summary Comment

Following review by the inspector of the stated actions and evidence submitted the non-compliances identified under Regulation 26(b), (4) have been adequately addressed.