

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2021WX002
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Name of Service:	Stepping Stones Early Years Centre
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Address of Service:	St Francis Hall, Sean Browne Crescent, Enniscorthy, Co. Wexford
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Name of Registered Provider:	Anita Cleary
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	12/01/2024
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No of pre-school children:	AM	14	PM	N/A
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	C. Ryan
Inspection undertaken by:	Early Years Inspector Tusla Child and Family Agency Ely Hospital, Ferrybank Wexford.
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 Early Years Centre is a private preschool service. The service opens from 8am-6pm Monday to Friday offering sessional and part time care for children aged from 2 to 6 years. The Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) sessional hours will be from 9am to 12pm. The service is also registered to cater for school aged children and offers a breakfast club and afterschool programme of care. The service is located in a community building in a residential estate in Enniscorthy, County Wexford. The premises have been completely renovated for the purpose of operating as a preschool service. It consists of two playrooms over two floors with sufficient toilets, nappy changing areas and a kitchen. An outdoor play area is available to the rear of the premises and is enclosed and secure.

Staffing

There were three staff employed to work directly with the preschool children in the service, including the registered provider. All staff working directly with the children attending the service held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at the minimum Level 5 and above on the National Qualifications Framework.

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, 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)

On the day of the inspection the registered provider was the designated person in charge and remained on the premises for the remainder of the inspection.

(2)

The service employs three staff who work directly with the children. The staff files for the three staff were reviewed on inspection.

(a)(b)

Validated references for all employees were kept in each staff member's file.

(c)

Garda vetting disclosures were available for all staff working in the service.

(d)

Police vetting was not required as none of the staff had lived outside the state for more than six consecutive months.

(4)

Certificates of qualifications for all staff members working directly with the preschool children were available on file.

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.

Compliance Information

(1)
Throughout the period of the inspection there were adequate numbers of staff working directly with the children attending the service.

(2)
During the morning there were 14 children being directly cared for by 3 staff. On the day of inspection all of the children were attending for a sessional service. The registered provider was present and works directly with the children in the room on the day of inspection.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 21 – Equipment and materials

A registered provider shall ensure that there is adequate and suitable furniture, play and work equipment and materials available on the premises of the pre-school service.

Compliance Information

The preschool room was bright and spacious with direct access from the room to the outdoor play area. The room was equipped with appropriate size furniture suitable to the children. There were three tables, which staff pulled together for snack time. Children and staff sat together during snack time chatting and sharing their news. Cosy rest areas were available in all the rooms for the children to rest and relax away for the other activities.

There were boxes of toys and materials on low level open shelves in small baskets/boxes, where they were easy to access by the children. The room had a good range of resourced interest areas. These included a well-stocked art station, a home corner and kitchen that was resourced with opened ended products and items from the home environment. There was a shop, a dolls house, construction area, a nature table with a goldfish and dress up materials. Activity trays were set up with sensory play opportunities, and there were water and sand trays.

A quiet corner was furnished with mats, and the children’s journals were on low shelves for children to look through. A good selection of books was available and staff asked children which book they would like to read during circle time. Throughout the room, there was artwork displayed that reflected the children’s current interest in arctic animals. A family wall and daily routine was displayed at the children’s level. The service used a system to prompt children between activities and transitions called “it is time to” and used photographs of their daily routine to support this.

A drinks table and tissue station supported children to independently attend to nasal hygiene and get a drink freely. Positive behaviour was managed with the use of visual cues, simple rules and direction. Magic words such as excuse me, please and thank you were displayed on a low board. A poster showed pictures of kind, unkind, helping, sharing and taking turns. All the children took turns doing jobs such as giving out lunches, feeding the goldfish and filling the compost bin.

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

Infection Control:

Children were observed being supervised with washing their hands before eating, after outdoor play and after toileting. There was warm running water, liquid soap and paper hand towels available for hygienic hand washing. The service was clean and well maintained, with daily cleaning schedules displayed and up to date.

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 staff trained in first aid for children available to the children attending the preschool service.

(2)(a)(b)

There was a suitably equipped first aid box stored in an easily accessible position and was available for use.

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.*
- (2) The record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection by-*
- (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)

Monthly fire drills were carried out in the service. The last recorded fire drill was carried out on the 18 December 2023.

(1)(b)

A record was maintained of when the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms were serviced. The last maintenance carried out in the service was recorded as having taken place in October and December 2023.

(4)

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

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

An insurance certificate was available to demonstrate that insurance was in place.