

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2022DS004		
Name of Service:	The Preschool Stewarts Care Ltd		
Address of Service:	Stewarts Care Palmerstown Campus, Mill Lane, Palmerstown, Co. Dublin		
Eircode:	D20 XT80		
Name of Registered Provider:	Brendan O'Connor		
Service type:	Sessional		
Date of Inspection:	27/01/2026		
No of pre-school children:	AM	9	PM N/A
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	The Brunel Building, Heuston South Quarter, St. John's Road West, Dublin 8.		
Inspection undertaken by:	R. Duff		
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		

Description of service

This preschool service is part of a large voluntary organisation which provides community-based services to adults and children with intellectual disabilities. The preschool service provides care and education for children aged 3 to 6 years of age with an intellectual disability and / or global developmental delay. Children attending the service are from a defined catchment area and are referred through the local Children’s Disability Network Team (CDNT). Each child attends for a maximum of three hours per session and the times are staggered between 9.30am and 1pm. The premises consists of a large standalone ground floor unit which is located on the Stewarts Care campus. It has been adapted to accommodate the service and consists of three care rooms, a multi-sensory room, an art and crafts room and a dining room for children. A kitchen and office are also provided. There is an outdoor sensory garden situated to the front of the premises and other outdoor spaces in close proximity on the premises which the children have access to.

Staffing

The service currently employs seven staff members. The registered provider does not work in the service. On the day of inspection six staff members were present and working directly with the children.

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

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This inspection was unannounced and focused on the areas of governance, health, welfare and development of child, information and records and safety. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required. The following regulations were reviewed:

Regulation 9 (1)(2)(3)(4) Management and recruitment.

Regulation 11(1)(2) Staffing levels.

Regulation 15 Records of a preschool child

Regulation 19 (1)(b) Health, welfare and development of child.

Regulation 23 Safeguarding the health, safety, and welfare of child.

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
- (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,

(3) The procedures specified in paragraph (2) shall be carried out prior to any person being appointed, assigned or allowed access to or contact with a child attending the pre-school service.

(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)
- The service had a designated person in charge and a named person to deputise as required who were both on the premises throughout the inspection.
- (2)

(a)(b)

The inspection including a review of the required documentation for two adults employed in the service since the last inspection dated the 16 January 2023. Garda vetting disclosures were assessed for each of the seven adults employed in the service. The following documentation was available;

Of the four written and validated references that were required, four were available from a past employer.

(c)

Garda vetting disclosures from the National Vetting Bureau of An Garda Síochána were available for seven staff members employed to work in the service. Garda vetting disclosures from all staff were assessed to determine compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years. Garda vetting which was dated within the last three years was available for five staff, however, the service did not adhere to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice for two staff.

Please refer to the information outlined under regulation 23 of this report.

(3)

Documentation reviewed evidence that the procedures specified above under 9(2)(a)(b)(c) had been carried out prior to two adults commencing employment in the service since the last inspection on 16 January 2023.

(4)

Records were available evidencing that two new staff members who were employed to work directly with the children held at least the required award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 or above 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.

Compliance Information

- (1)
An adequate number of adults were working directly with the children at all times during the inspection.
- (2)
The minimum ratio of adults to children for sessional services was adhered to at all times during the inspection. There were 10 children attending the service being supervised by 6 staff members.

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) shall be open to inspection on the premises by-
- (c) an authorised person.

Compliance Information

(1) The records of 5 children who were attending the service were reviewed and contained the following particulars:

(a) The name and date of birth of each child.

(b) The date on which each child first attended the service.

© There was an area on the registration form where the date when a child would cease to attend the service will be recorded.

(d) The names, addresses and telephone number of parents were recorded and information where parents can be contacted during the hours of operation of the service were also available.

© Names and contact details of other adults who were authorised to collect children were available.

(f) The documentation available supported the recording of specific illnesses, allergies, disabilities and dietary preferences for children.

(g) The name and telephone number of the child's registered medical practitioner was available.

(h) Record of immunisations received by the child was detailed.

(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) was open to inspection on the premises 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

The inspector observed appropriate care practices in place in the service during the inspection. On Arrival children were enjoying free play in the main room and staff explained that children spend time in this room before moving to their assigned rooms or spending time in one of the more specific rooms such as arts and crafts room or sensory room. Staff members were attentive and responsive to the needs of the children throughout the morning and were observed to respond to children in a calm and relaxed manner throughout the inspection. The staff

provided children with comfort, direction and one to one care when needed. Staff were observed to support children during conflict resolution or in completion of tasks.

Children were given lots of advance warnings to support transitions and to alert them of mealtimes. The service has a healthy eating policy which is shared with parents/guardians in advance of enrolment. The service provides a hot meal for all children and staff were observed to actively encourage children to try the food, staff members were also observed to support children to eat independently. Staff members explained that children can bring lunch from home if they wish and this was closely monitored by staff for choking hazards. Meal times were social occasions with children and adults sitting together to create a safe, calm environment. Drinks were readily available within the care rooms. Children were assisted to clean their faces and hands at appropriate times.

Child sized tables and appropriate chairs allowed the children to eat and engage in tabletop activities. There was evidence that equipment and materials provided were based on the children's individual needs and emergent interests, with lots of specialist equipment and furniture specific to the children attending the service. The toys and equipment were laid out on low level shelving units and accessible to children. All children were afforded the opportunity to take part in activities that interested them, and staff were observed to actively join in.

The care rooms had cushions and floor mats in various locations throughout to facilitate rest or provide a place for children to take a break from activities.

The outdoor area was equipped with a range of toys and materials to support play experiences. A sheltered area also offered a space for children to take part in alternative activities while outside.

Engagement with families and parents is facilitated by the daily sharing of information on the child's day. This is shared through conversations at drop off and collection and supported by electronic means. Regular meeting between key workers and families are scheduled but staff explained that unplanned meetings are also facilitated.

On the day of inspection transitions from preschool to home were observed to be friendly, informative and engaging to parents or guardians collecting children.

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:

- When the inspector arrived at the service, access to the main door was monitored and controlled by staff to restrict unauthorized persons from gaining access to the premises and to prevent children from exiting the service unsupervised. In addition, the outdoor play area was enclosed, restricting unauthorized persons from gaining access to this area and to prevent children from exiting the service unsupervised.
- There were no flexes or cables observed that were accessible to the children.
- Medication and cleaning agents to include disinfectant sprays and liquids were stored in a locked cupboard or on a high shelf out of reach of children.
- Toys and equipment in the indoors environment were maintained in good condition free from hazards.
- The outdoor area was observed to be suitable, safe and secure with domestic bins stored out of children's reach and all outdoor play materials maintained and in good condition free from hazards.

Infection Control:

- The indoor and outdoor environments were maintained in a clean condition.
- The sanitary facilities were equipped with warm water, paper towel, liquid soap, and pedal operated bin.
- The children were supported by staff members to wash their hands at appropriate intervals throughout the inspection

Administration of Medication:

- Staff demonstrated a clear understanding of procedures to safeguard children when administering medicine. This included getting written consent from parents or guardians, having a second staff member present as a witness during administration, and maintaining detailed records shared with parents or guardians upon collection. Care plans were available for children who required emergency medication.

Fire Safety:

- The designated fire escape routes were clearly indicated and free from obstruction on the day of inspection.

- Staff adequately detailed the procedure to safely evacuate children from the service in the event of a fire and evacuation procedures were on display throughout the service.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. The service did not adhere to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years. Renewed vetting was not available for two staff members working in the service.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

The person in charge immediately applied for renewed Garda vetting for both staff members. The person in charge has stated Garda Vetting is now place for both staff member and all staff files will be checked thoroughly in the future.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

Supporting documentation has been submitted and reviewed by the early years inspector.

Summary Comment

The regulatory requirement has been met.