

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

<b>TUSLA Identifier:</b>	TU2022WH001
--------------------------	-------------

<b>Name of Service:</b>	Early Steps Childcare
-------------------------	-----------------------

<b>Address of Service:</b>	Corcloon, Milltown Pass, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath
----------------------------	---

<b>Eircode:</b>	N91 W7T2
-----------------	----------

<b>Name of Registered Provider:</b>	Niamh Ryan
-------------------------------------	------------

<b>Service type:</b>	Part Time, Sessional
----------------------	----------------------

<b>Date of Inspection:</b>	14/12/2023
----------------------------	------------

<b>No of pre-school children:</b>	AM	20	PM	10
-----------------------------------	----	----	----	----

<b>Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:</b>	Early Years Inspectorate, Tusla, Child and Family Agency, SAP Office, St. Loman's Campus, Springfield, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath.
<b>Inspection undertaken by:</b>	C.O' Connor Hughes
<b>Title:</b>	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).

<b>Conditions if applicable</b>	Not applicable
---------------------------------	----------------

### Description of service

The service is registered as a part time service and delivers the Early Childhood Care and Education Scheme (ECCE) to children. The service operates from 08:30 to 15:30 on a Monday to Friday basis providing two ECCE sessions from 09:00 to 12:00 and 12:30 to 15:30.

The single storey premises consists of a reception area, a pre-school room and a kitchen. An outdoor play area is located to the rear of the premises. On-site parking and set down facilities are available. The service is rural in its location on the outskirts of the village of Milltownpass, County Westmeath.

### Staffing

The registered provider and two adults were working directly with children on the 14 December 2023.

### 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 II - Registration and Register

### Regulation 8 - Notification of change in circumstances

*(1) A registered provider of a pre-school service other than a temporary pre-school service shall, subject to paragraph (3), notify the Agency in writing of any proposed change in the details in relation to the pre-school service contained in the register pursuant to section 58C (2) of the Act or Regulation 7(2) at least 60 days before it is proposed that the change would take effect.*

### Compliance Information

The service submitted a change in circumstance to TUSLA registration office on the 14 December 2022 to operate a second ECCE session from 12:30 to 15:30. This change was accepted by the registration office.

### 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,*

*(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.*

*(6) Paragraph (4) shall not apply before 1 September 2021 to a person who-*

- (a) has signed a declaration on or before 30 June 2016 to the effect that he or she intends to retire from employment in a pre-school service before 1 September 2021, and*
- (b) is in possession of a letter from the Minister confirming that paragraph (4) shall not apply to him or her before that date.*

*(6A) is inserted by S.I. No.632 of 2016 CHILD CARE ACT 1991 (EARLY YEARS SERVICES) (AMENDMENT)*

*REGULATIONS 2016 which states; Regulation 9 of the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations (S.I.*

*No. 221 of 2016) is amended - in paragraph (4), by the substitution of “paragraphs (5), (6) and (6A)” for “paragraphs (5) and (6)”, and (b) by the insertion of the following paragraph after paragraph (6): “*

*(6A) Paragraph (4) shall not apply to an employee of a registered provider where - (a) the registered provider receives funding for the employment of the employee pursuant to a scheme funded by the Minister and known as the Access and Inclusion Model, and (b) the employment of the employee is for the purpose of providing support, pursuant to the scheme referred to in subparagraph (a), for a child attending the service to enable the child to participate in the programme known as the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) funding Programme.”*

## Compliance Information

(1)(a)

The designated person in charge and a named person to deputise were available as required.

(b)

The registered provider was present for the duration of the inspection.

Five staff files including the registered provider were reviewed and the following was noted:

(2)(a)(b)

Two written references were available in respect of four staff members.

The references were validated in respect of two staff members.

Two written references were available in respect of the registered provider.

(c)

A Garda Vetting disclosure was available in respect of the staff members and the registered provider.

(d)

Police vetting was not required as no staff member or the registered provider had lived outside the state for a period of longer than six consecutive months.

(4)

The staff members working directly with children attending the service held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Levels 5 to Level 8 on the National Framework of Qualifications.

(6) (a)(b)

No employee had signed a declaration on or before the 30<sup>th</sup> of June 2016 to the effect that they intended to retire from employment in a pre-school service.

(6A)

An employee present was working directly with children under the Access and Inclusion Model.

### Non-Compliance Information

(2)(a)(b)

The references in respect of two staff members were not validated prior to employment in the service.

### Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

#### **Corrective and Preventive Action**

A checklist has been put in place to ensure that all relevant paperwork regarding staffing files is completed in accordance to the regulations.

The service will ensure that the checklist is completed by the manager in charge.

#### **Supporting documentation submitted**

References.

### Summary Comment

Evidence submitted and reviewed by the Early Years Inspector met the Regulatory requirement.

## Part III – Management and Staff

### Regulation 10 - Policies, procedures etc. of pre-school service

*A registered provider of a pre-school service shall ensure that the written policies, procedures and statements specified in Schedule 5 are in place for the service.*

### Compliance Information

The following policies were reviewed and the content was found to be in keeping with the requirements of Regulation 10.

- Statement of Purpose and Function.
- Administration of Medication Policy.
- Infection Control Policy.
- Behaviour Management Policy.
- Fire Safety Policy.
- Healthy Eating Policy.

### Non-Compliance Information

1. The accident and incident policy reviewed did not contain the required information in keeping with the requirements of Regulation 10.

- Measures to be taken in the service to prevent accidents and incidents.
- The procedures to be followed when an accident or incident involving a pre-school child occurs while the child is attending the service.
- The policy did not include the steps that are to be taken to contact the parent or guardian of the child or the emergency services if necessary.
- The policy clearly defines how a record should be shared with the parent or guardian of the child to whom it relates.
- The policy sets out how notifiable incidents will be informed to the Early Years Inspectorate.
- A risk assessment is taken following an incident/accident occurring in the service.

#### Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

##### **Corrective and Preventive Action**

The accident and incident policy in relation to Regulation 10 has been updated by the registered provider and the two other staff members and we have ensured that it meets the needs of our service.

Going forward as a team we will be reviewing each policy and ensuring that it meets the needs of our ever-evolving service.

##### **Supporting documentation submitted**

Accident and incident policy.

#### Summary Comment

Evidence submitted and reviewed by the Early Years Inspector met the Regulatory requirement.

### 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.*

*(4) 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)

The minimum ratio of adults to children was maintained during the inspection.

(4)

There were twenty children attending the service supervised directly by three adults including the registered provider.

(8)(a)

A staff roster indicated that two adults are on the premises at all times.



### 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-*

*(a) each child's learning, development and well-being is facilitated within the daily life of the pre-school service through the provision of the appropriate activities, interaction, materials and equipment, having regard to the age and stage of development of the child, and*

#### Compliance Information

(1)(a)

Children were observed to enjoy the play activities during the morning session that included storytime, singing songs with rhyming actions, colouring Christmas pictures and outdoor play.

Children were encouraged to be independent as they dressed for outdoor play assisted by staff as needed.

Children went to the toilet independently and washed their hands supervised by staff.

Nappy changing was carried out as needed. Good communication was observed between the staff member and child during nappy changing.

The staff were positive towards children and were familiar with each child and their personalities. Staff used individual names, maintained eye contact and conversed with the children during play activities, nappy changing, toileting and mealtimes. Children requiring extra assistance were supported by staff. Good teamwork was observed amongst staff.

The pre-school room was bright and colourful with children's artwork displayed depicting a Christmas theme. A range of developmentally appropriate experiences to meet children's learning needs was available in the pre-school room. Areas of interest included a home area, a dolls house, arts and crafts area, sensory play and a shop. Age and stage appropriate toys and materials were accessible to children on low level shelving. Children were observed to relax in the cosy rest area established in the pre-school room.

The outdoor play area consisted of an absorbent surface. Children enjoyed playing physical games and riding on bicycles and tricycles supervised by staff. A wooden swing was in place for children's use. A shed for storage of toys and equipment was noted in the outdoor play area.

The service works in partnership with parents and guardians. Parents were observed to collect their children from the pre-school room after the ECCE session. A verbal handover was provided to parents at this time.

Newsletters are circulated to each family attending the service. A parent notice board is displayed in the reception area of the service.

Each child has their own learning journal depicting their play and work activities. The staff member stated the child's journal is shared with parents at regular intervals throughout the year. Parents are invited to attend the children's upcoming Christmas play in the service.

### 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

Adequate and suitable furniture, play materials and work equipment was available on the premises available to staff and children.

### Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

#### Regulation 22 – Food and drink

*A registered provider shall ensure that adequate and suitable, nutritious and varied food and drink is available for each pre-school child attending the pre-school service.*

#### Compliance Information

Drinking water was available to children to self-serve as required in the pre-school room.

At 10:30 children enjoyed snacks provided by their parents that included sandwiches, fruit and yoghurt with water to drink.

A fridge was available in the kitchen for the storage of perishable foods.

A healthy eating policy is in place in the service.

The registered provider stated she communicated with parents the contents of the healthy eating policy and suggestions for snacks and lunches to the parents at the start of the pre-school term in September 2023.

## 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 main entrance door to the service was secure to ensure the safety of the children within. A keypad coded system was in place for access to the service.

The service met the necessary safety requirements in respect of the indoor environment, toys and equipment and the safe storage of cleaning agents.

##### Infection Control:

The premises were visually clean. All toys and materials were easily cleanable. Cleaning schedules were available and reviewed.

Warm running water was available at wash hand basins. Hand paper towels and liquid soap was available in the sanitary accommodation. The water temperature at the wash hand basins were recorded at 35.9 degrees Celsius.

Foot operated pedal bins were available in the pre-school room and in the sanitary accommodation for the hygienic disposal of waste.

The sanitary accommodation and pre-school room were ventilated by mechanical ventilation and openable windows.

The nappy changing procedure observed was carried correctly in line with the service's nappy changing procedure displayed.

##### Administration of Medication:

No medication was given at the time of the inspection. Temperature reducing medication was stored safely in the service if a child presented with a high temperature.

##### Fire Safety:

Emergency exits were unobstructed from the pre-school room in the service. The fire assembly point was noted to the front of the service.

**Outing:**

The deputy designated person in charge stated the service does not undertake outings from the service.

**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.*

*(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 without his or her entry being approved by an employee, and*

*(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 records of arrival and departure reviewed verified that each child attending the service was checked in and out of the service by a staff member.

(3)(a)

All entry to the service with the exception of (i), (ii), (iii) and (iv) was approved by a staff member.

(4)

The visitor log is retained throughout the annual operation of the service.

### 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 adults were qualified in First Aid Response (FAR) and available on the premises during the hours of operation.
- (2)(a)  
A first aid box was located in the pre-school room.
- (b)  
A first aid box was accessible to children in the pre-school 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 written record for the completed monthly fire drills was available on the premises. The last fire drill was recorded as taking place on the 16 November 2023.
- (b)  
A record was available demonstrating the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms on the premises. The firefighting equipment and the smoke alarms in the premises were serviced in July 2023.

(4)

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

### Part VI - Safety

#### Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

#### Compliance Information

There was evidence of current insurance cover for the number of children attending the service. The expiry date noted was 27 March 2024.