

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report School Age Services

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2023FL013SA
Name of School Age Service:	First Steps Academy
Name of Registered Provider:	Shirley Flannery
Address of School Age Service:	Stapolin ETNS, Myrtle Road, Baldoye, Dublin
Eircode:	D13 PP2W

Date of Inspection:	4 December 2024
Number of school age children present during inspection:	PM 38
Registration status:	Registered
Conditions (if applicable):	Not applicable

Address of the Early Years Inspectorate	Brunel Building, Heuston South Quarter, Saint John's Road West, Dublin 8. D08 X01F
Inspection undertaken by:	A. Bradshaw M. McDonald
Title:	Early years inspectors

Authority to Inspect
Tusla's 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).

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Description of Service:

First Steps Academy is a school aged service based in a primary school in Dublin 13. The service uses the general-purpose hall and the school's outdoor area once the school day is over. The service is registered to care for up to 96 children from 4 to 12 years of age. The service operates from 7.30am to 8.20am and 1pm to 6pm during the school term. Outside of the academic year, the service operates a summer camp from 8am to 6pm for 14 weeks.

Staffing:

There are nine staff members employed in the service, including the operations manager and relief staff. The registered provider does not work directly with the children. On the day of the inspection, there were 4 staff members with 38 children.

Additional Information:

The inspector conducted a planned, focused inspection of the service.

Legislation

Tusla's Early Years Inspectorate is the independent statutory regulator of School Age Services in Ireland, and its role is to promote and monitor the safety and quality of school age care provision in accordance with the following legislation:

- The Child and Family Agency Act 2013, Part 12.
- Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) (Registration of School Age Services) (Amendment) Regulations 2022.
- The Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Registration of School Age Services Regulations 2018 (S.I. 575 of 2018).

A school age service means any early years service, play group, day nursery, crèche, day-care or other similar service which:

- caters for children under the age of 15 years enrolled in a school providing primary or post-primary education,
- provides a range of activities that are developmental, educational and recreational in manner, which take place outside of school hours, the primary purpose of which is to care for children where their parents are unavailable, and
- the basis for access to which is made publicly known to the parents and guardians of the children referred to in point (a) above.

It is the responsibility of a registered provider to ensure the safety and well-being of school age children and the above legislation authorises Tusla to assess compliance with the Regulations.

Inspection Methodology:

The inspection is unannounced to assess compliance with the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Registration of School Age Services Regulations 2018 (S.I. 575 of 2018), Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) (Registration of School Age Services) (Amendment) Regulations 2022, and the Child Care Act 1991, Section 58 as amended by Part 12 of the Child and Family Agency Act, 2013.

The findings on inspection are gathered through a triangulation method, including:

- Information obtained through examination of documentation.
- Direct observation.
- Discussion with relevant staff.

This inspection aims to determine the extent to which service is appropriate for the care, safety, and wellbeing of children in accordance with the regulations cited above.

Inspection findings are documented in the School Age Services 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 corrected the non-compliance and how they will prevent them 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 CAPA 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.

Acknowledgements:

The inspectors wish to acknowledge the co-operation of the children, operations manager and staff who were present on the day of the inspection.

Summary of Findings:

On inspection, the registered provider was found to be compliant in relation to the following:

- Regulation 8: Vetting disclosures;
- Regulation 9(1)(2)(4): Staffing levels;
- Regulation 12: Insurance.

Regulation 8: Vetting disclosures

- (1) A registered provider of a school age service other than a childminding service 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.*
- (2) The procedures specified in paragraph 1 shall be carried out prior to any person being appointed, assigned or allowed access to or contact with a child attending the school age service.*

Regulatory Requirement Met

(1)

The inspectors reviewed nine staff files.

Each staff file had the required validated references, Garda vetting disclosures and Police vetting for review by the inspectors. The service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring Garda vetting to be completed every three years.

(2)

Documents reviewed on the day demonstrated that vetting procedures were carried out before staff were employed.

Regulation 9: Staffing levels

- (1) *Subject to this Regulation, a registered provider of a school age service other than a childminding service shall ensure that there is at all times an adequate number of competent and suitable adults on the premises while the service is operating.*
- (2) *Without prejudice to paragraph (1), a registered provider of a school age service other than a childminding service shall ensure that there is a minimum ratio of 1 adult to 12 children at all times while the service is operating.*
- (4) *A registered provider of a school age service shall ensure that the school age children attending the service are appropriately supervised at all times.*

Regulatory Requirement Met

On the day of the inspection, the registered provider ensured appropriate staffing levels were in place. Thirty-eight children were being cared for by four staff members. The operations manager arrived at the service during the inspection and was available to offer support if required. A review of the child and staff attendance records demonstrated that the ratio of 1 adult to 12 children was maintained between 4 November 2024 and 26 November 2024.

Regulation 12: Insurance

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

Regulatory Requirement Met

The service had insurance cover for a maximum of 48 school age children. The insurance was valid from 2 September 2024 to March 2025.