

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

School Age Services

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2024DY015SA
Name of School Age Service:	First Steps Academy
Name of Registered Provider:	Shirley Flannery
Address of School Age Service:	St Francis of Assi Primary School Belmayne Dublin 13
Eircode:	D13P5VY

Date of Inspection:	10/02/2026
Number of school age children present during inspection:	PM 33
Registration status:	Registered
Conditions (if applicable):	Not applicable

Address of the Early Years Inspectorate	Early Years Inspectorate, 7 th Floor Brunel Building, Heuston South Quarter, St. John's Road West, Kilmainham, Dublin 8 D08X01K
Inspection undertaken by:	L.A Webster and E. Griffin
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).

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

School Age Services

Description of Service:

First Steps Academy is a school-aged service that is based within a national school in North Dublin. The service has use on of large care hall. The service is registered to operate from 1:30pm to 6pm during the school term and from 8am to 6pm during non-term time. The service offers care to children from 4-12 years of age.

Staffing:

The registered provider does not work within the service. There are six staff members employed by the registered provider to work directly with the children. This includes an area manager, a service manager, and four staff that work directly with the children.

Additional Information:

The inspection was triggered following information received by the inspectorate.

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:

- a) caters for children under the age of 15 years enrolled in a school providing primary or post-primary education,
- b) 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
- c) 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, area manager, person in charge, and staff who were present on the day of inspection.

Summary of Findings:

On the day of inspection, the registered provider was found to be compliant in:

- Regulation 8 Vetting disclosures
- Regulation 9(1)(2) Staffing Levels
- Regulation 12 Insurance

The registered provider was found to be non-compliant in:

- Regulation 7 Notification of change in circumstance
- Regulation 9(4) Staffing levels
- Section 58g as amended by Part 12 of the Child and Family Agency Act, 2013

Conclusion and follow up actions:

The actions and evidence submitted by the registered provider, in their preventive and corrective action plan, have addressed the non-compliances identified on inspection.

Regulation 7: Notification of change in circumstances

(1) A registered provider of a school age service shall, subject to paragraph (2), notify the Agency in writing of any proposed change in the details in relation to the school age service contained in the register pursuant to section 58C (2) of the Act or Regulation 6(2) or 6(3) at least 60 days before it is proposed that the change would take effect.

Regulatory Requirement not met

On the day of inspection, it was found that the registered provider did not furnish the inspectorate in writing, or within the specified time frame with proposed changes in relation to the school aged service.

Corrective & Preventive Action Response submitted by the Registered Provider

The Notification of Proposed Change in Circumstances Form was completed and submitted to Tusla. All required supporting documentation relating to the change in Person in Charge was attached. Confirmation of submission has been retained on file. Any proposed change in registered details will be notified to Tusla a minimum of 60 days prior to implementation with compliance audits conducted regularly.

Summary of Findings

The actions and evidence submitted by the registered provider, in their preventive and corrective action plan, have addressed the non-compliance identified on inspection.

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

The files of six staff members were reviewed. There were two references available for each of the six adults from a previous employer or source other than a previous employer. These references were validated by the area manager as required. Garda vetting disclosures were available for the six adults working within the service. The documentation reviewed demonstrated that police vetting was available as required. These documents were in place before the staff members commenced employment as required by legislation.

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

(1)(2)

There were five staff members working with 33 children. The area manager was available to offer support when required. The children were supervised by staff and were engaged in a number of indoor activities on the day of inspection.

Regulatory Requirement not met

(4) The service did not ensure adequate supervision at all times during the inspection. Observations between 15:36pm and 16:42pm documented a number of children independently using the sanitary facilities. The sanitary facilities are located a significant distance from the care room and through a set of doors meaning children were out of sight of the adult who was positioned at the classroom door. This posed a safety risk to children.

Corrective & Preventive Action Response submitted by the Registered Provider

Doors in the corridor have been secured to prevent access to the exit area. A designated staff member now escorts children to the toilet area and remains positioned within sight and sound supervision. The corridor door will remain closed and secured at all times during the After School Program. Staff members have been instructed to monitor and ensure that the door remains properly closed throughout program hours. Ongoing supervision and periodic checks will be conducted to maintain compliance with safety regulations and to ensure a safe environment for all children.

Summary of Findings

The actions and evidence submitted by the registered provider, in their preventive and corrective action plan, have addressed the non-compliance identified on inspection

Regulation 12: Insurance

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

Regulatory Requirement Met

The service was insured to provide care for 48 children and is insured until the 26 March 2026.

Regulation 13: Complaints

(1) A registered provider of a school age service other than a childminding service shall ensure that the complaints policy of the service specifies—

- (a) the procedure to be followed by a person for the purposes of making a complaint in relation to the service,*
- (b) the manner in which such a complaint shall be dealt with, and*
- (c) the procedures for keeping a person who makes such a complaint informed of the manner in which it is being dealt with.*

(2) A registered provider of a school age service other than a childminding service shall ensure that—

- (a) a record in writing is kept of a complaint made to the provider in respect of the school age service, and*
- (b) the complaint is duly dealt with in accordance with the provider's complaints policy.*

(3) A record in writing referred to in paragraph (2)(a) shall—

- (b) be open to inspection on the premises by an authorised person.*

Regulatory Requirement Met

(1) (a)(b)(c) The complaints policy detailed the procedure for making a complaint and how verbal and written complaints would be dealt with. The policy referenced how a complainant would be kept informed of the complaints procedure and specified timelines for responses.

(2) (a)(b) The service ensured that a record in writing was kept of any complaints that were made to the school age service and that the complaint was dealt with in accordance with

the services complaints policy.

(3) (b) Records were open to inspection by an authorised person.

Child Care Act 1991, Section 58(G) as amended by Part 12 of the Child and Family Agency Act, 2013

It shall be the duty of every person providing an early years service to take all reasonable measures to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of children attending the service and to comply with regulations made by the Minister under this Part.

Regulatory Requirement Met

- Staff were observed to positively interact with children and use kind tones. Children were engaged in various activities that supported their cognitive and physical development on the day.
- In discussion with staff, it was evident that they were aware of medical care plans for children and where the emergency medication is stored. In addition to this, staff were aware of the procedures to take in relation to potential anaphylaxis and the administering of emergency treatment if the event occurred.

Regulatory Requirement not met

- A review of staff files and discussion with staff indicated that a staff member with up to date First aid responder certification is not available in the service at all times. It is acknowledged that two of the adults present were trained in paediatric first aid, and the area manager, who was present on the day holds a FAR certification.
- There was evidence to show that two of the prevention strategies which were part of an individual education plan for a child this service had not been implemented. This is at variance with information given to the inspectorate which outlined these preventative actions would be implemented to help support this child.
- The details of the attendance of the children were not accurately recorded in the attendance book. Evidenced by the following: When the inspector asked the staff how many children were present at 14:49pm staff stated there were 28 children were present. When the inspector checked the children's, attendance record it showed there was 37 children marked present. Staff told the inspector that five of the children were at other activities on the

premises and other children had gone home. Contemporaneous accurate attendance logs must be maintained to support the safe evacuation of children and staff in the event of an emergency evacuation.

Corrective & Preventive Action Response submitted by the Registered Provider

Two staff members currently hold valid Paediatric First Aid certification and were present in the service. The Area Manager and General Manager hold a current First Aid Responder (FAR) certificate and are based within 5 minutes of the service location. This ensures that appropriate first aid support is immediately accessible. The service will ensure a minimum of two staff members maintain current Paediatric First Aid certification at all times.

The two identified prevention strategies were implemented immediately following inspection and responsibilities were assigned to staff members. The designated calm area and its associated resources will remain permanently available and clearly accessible to promote continuous emotional support for children.

Attendance records were reviewed and reconciled immediately following inspection and an updated Club List was compiled. Attendance will now be recorded in real time as children arrive, leave, or attend other activities and attendance records will be cross-checked every 30 minutes. The updated club list will remain readily accessible at all times to ensure clarity in operations, appropriate oversight, and consistent accountability

Summary of Findings

The actions and evidence submitted by the registered provider, in their preventive and corrective action plan, have addressed the non-compliances identified on inspection.