

# TUSLA REGULATORY INSPECTION REPORT

**TUSLA Identifier:** TU2015OY053

**Name of Service:** Stepping Stones Early Learning Centre Limited

**Address of Service:** Clonaderg  
Ballinahown  
Athlone  
Co. Offaly

**Email Address:** lorrainecfarrell@yahoo.ie

**Date Service Registered:** 3 1 1 2 2 0 1 9

**Name of Registered Service Provider:** Lorraine Farrell

**Type of Service Registered:** **Sessional**

**Date of Inspection:** 1 5 0 1 2 0

<b>No of Pre-School Children present during Inspection:</b>	<b>AM</b>	27	<b>PM</b>	
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**Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:** Early Years Inspectorate,  
Primary Care Centre, Church Avenue,  
Tullamore, Co. Offaly.

**Inspection undertaken by :** D. Molloy  
**Title:** Early Years Inspector

Areas which were the subject of this Inspection	
<b>Governance</b>	<b>Health Welfare and Development of Child</b>

**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>Registration Status</b> (completed by the Registration Office):	
<b>Conditions If Applicable</b>	
<b>Additional Notes</b>	
<b>Date of Registration</b>	

<b>Description of Service</b>	Stepping Stones Early Learning Centre Limited has been in operation on this site since 2011. The age range of children attending is from 2 years 8 months to 6 years. A sessional service is operated from 9.15am to 12.15pm, Monday to Friday. The service has an enrolment of thirty three children. Stepping Stones Early Learning Centre Limited is a privately operated service in the rural area of Ballinahown, Co. Offaly.
<b>Premises</b>	This early years service is operated from a purpose built building on the grounds of the registered providers own domestic dwelling. The service consists of two play rooms, one larger than the other which is divided into two distinct areas, a lobby, four toilets and wash hand basins are provided. A large extensive secure outdoor play area is provided to the side of the premises. The premises is used for the sole purpose of operating an early years service.
<b>Staffing</b>	The registered provider was not part of the staff compliment of four adults but facilitated the inspection. All adults employed and working directly with the pre-school children have qualifications ranging from level 6 to level 8 Q.Q.I., National Qualifications Framework in Early Years.
<b>Methodology</b>	<p>The inspection was an unannounced Focused Inspection to assess compliance with the Childcare Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 and Childcare Act 1991 (Early Years Services) (Amendment) Regulations 2016. The Inspection focused on regulations under two themes; Governance, and the Health, Welfare and Development of the Child.</p> <p>The findings on inspection based on information obtained through examination of documentation, direct observation, and discussion with staff are documented in the Inspection report. This report which will be presented to the Registration Panel for consideration in relation to the service receiving continued registration. The Inspectorate reserves the right to edit responses received for reasons including: clarity; completeness; and, compliance with administrative and legal purposes. The contents of the report are compiled by the inspectorate body.</p>
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	The inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, staff and acknowledges the children who were present on the day of the inspection.

## GOVERNANCE

## 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.
- (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."

## Part III - Management and Staff

### Regulation 9 - Management and Recruitment

Compliance Information:

- (1)(a) The registered provider ensured that the service had a designated person in charge and a named person who is able to deputise as required.
- (b) The registered provider ensured that 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) The registered provider ensured that each employee and students were suitable and competent taking into consideration the nature of the needs of children, including by 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) Completed vetting had been received from the National Vetting Bureau of the Garda Síochána in respect of all staff.
- (d) Vetting from other police authorities was available for adults who required it.
- (4) The registered provider ensured 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.
- (6)(a),(b) Not applicable as no adult had signed a declaration on or before 30/06/2016 to the effect that they intended to retire from employment in pre-school services before 01/09/2021 or was in possession of a letter from the Minister confirming paragraph (4) shall not apply before that date.
- (6A) One child was availing of the AIM scheme (Access and Inclusion Model).

## 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.*
- (3) *Subject to paragraph (5), a registered provider of a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that at all times the minimum ratio of adults to children specified in column (3) of Part 2 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.*
- (8) *Without prejudice to paragraphs (2) to (7)—*
- (c) *a registered provider of a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that, where the person in charge operates the service single-handedly, a second person familiar with the operation of the service and in a position to provide assistance to the person in charge in operating the service is, at all times, within close distance of the service and available to attend the service to assist the person in charge in the event of an emergency.*

Compliance Information:	<p>(1) There were twenty seven pre-school children attending the service. Four adults were working directly with these children throughout the session.</p> <p>(3) At all times the minimum ratio of adults to children was adhered to.</p> <p>(8)(c) Not applicable.</p>
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## HEALTH WELFARE & DEVELOPMENT OF CHILD

### 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*

Compliance Information:	<p><b>BASIC NEEDS</b></p> <p>Healthy eating was promoted and the service had a healthy eating policy which was shared with the parents. Healthy snacks were provided from home and stored in the fridge until lunch time. Children played outdoors each day and a programme of physical exercise had been introduced to the daily routine, children were observed enjoying a physical floor exercise similar to a physical workout during the session. Children were encouraged to be independent and self caring, looking after their own belongings, coats, bags and lunchboxes. Children's choices and decisions in relation to their play and own interests were respected and encouraged by staff.</p>
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## Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

### Regulation 19 - Health, Welfare and Development of Child

#### SUPPORTING RELATIONSHIPS AROUND CHILDREN

Parents were included with regular updates including a monthly newsletter, sharing of their children’s learning journals and a notice board in the service. The registered provider sent weekly individual texts to parents in order to update

Transitions from home to school were supported with open day and visits to the service prior to enrolment. Transitions from pre-school to the three main schools in the area were supported by teachers invitation to story time, dress up area stocked with school jumpers towards the end of term. The service provided a “Mo Scéal” booklet on each child with information for transition to primary school. Staff were kind and courteous towards the children and children were happy and content in their environment.

#### PHYSICAL AND MATERIAL ENVIRONMENT

The pre-school was equipped with a large range of quality toys and equipment which were stored at children’s height. Children could follow their own interest and access their choice of equipment without assistance. The play room was laid out to include different interest areas including construction area, kitchens and home corner, arts and crafts, a sensory area, library and rest area. Messy play, sand play, potting and gardening were supported in the outdoors by provision of sand boxes, mud kitchen and water play.

## 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 18 December**

**(b) A record was available demonstrating the number, type and maintenance of the fire fighting equipment in the premises. Fire fighting equipment was serviced on 25 November 2019 and the alarm was serviced on 25 November**

**(4) A notice of the procedure to be followed in the event of fire was displayed in a conspicuous position in the premises.**