

TUSLA REGULATORY INSPECTION REPORT



TUSLA Identifier: TU2015OY053

Name of Service: Stepping Stones Early Learning Centre

Address of Service: Clonaderg
Ballinahown
Co. Offaly
N37 AR00

Email Address: lorrainefarrell@yahoo.ie

Name of Registered Service Provider: Lorraine Farrell

Type of Service Registered: Sessional

Date of Inspection: 0 3 0 2 2 2

No of Pre-School Children present during Inspection: AM 24 PM N/A

Address of the Early Years Inspectorate: Early Years Inspectorate,
Tusla, Child and Family Agency,
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

Governance	Health Welfare and Development of Child	Safety
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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	<p>This sessional service provides an Early Childhood Care and Education programme to children aged 2 to 6 years from 09:15-12:15 The service operates on a Monday to Friday basis and has been in operation since 2009.</p>
Premises	<p>The service is located in the towns land of Clonaderg outside the village of Ballinahown in rural Co. Offaly. The service operates from a premises on the grounds of the registered providers domestic dwelling. The premises is used for the sole purpose of operating an early years service. Access to the service is gained through the front gate from the roadway through the main door, which is secured. Entry through the internal door is controlled from within the service by means of a buzzer.</p> <p>The service consists of the playrooms, three toilets and two wash hand basins. An outdoor play area is provided to the back and side of the premises which can be accessed directly from the playroom. Parking is available on the public roadway.</p>
Staffing	<p>Six adults including the registered provider were present and working with the children on the 03.02.2022. All adults employed and working directly with the pre-school children have qualifications at level 6 to level 9 on the Q.Q.I., National Framework of Qualifications in Early Years.</p>
Methodology	<p>Tusla’s Early Years Inspectorate (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.</p> <p>The findings on inspection are based on.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information obtained through examination of documentation • Direct observation • Discussion with relevant staff <p>This inspection was unannounced and focused on areas of Governance, Health, Welfare and Development of Child and Safety. Inspections may also focus on other areas as required.</p> <p>The inspection process has been amended to minimise the amount of time that inspectors spend in the service.</p> <p>The Inspectorate reserves the right to edit responses received for reasons including clarity, completeness and compliance with administrative and legal processes.</p> <p>The contents of the report are compiled by the inspectorate body.</p>
Acknowledgements	<p>The Inspector wishes to acknowledge the co-operation of the registered provider, staff members and children who were present on the day of the inspection.</p>

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
- (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."
- (7) A registered provider shall ensure that all employees, unpaid workers and contractors are appropriately supervised and provided with appropriate information, and where necessary training, including in relation to the following:
- (a) the policies, procedures and statements of the service specified in Schedule 5;

Compliance Information:

- (1) (a)
The service had a designated person in charge and a named person to deputise as required.
- (b)
The designated person in charge was present during the inspection.
- The registered provider stated no new staff members had commenced employment in the service since the last inspection.

Part III - Management and Staff

Regulation 9 - Management and Recruitment

	<p>(2) (a)(b)(c)(d) Not applicable as no new staff members have been employed since the last inspection.</p> <p>(4) The adults present, working with the children held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 6 to level 9 on the National Framework of Qualifications.</p> <p>(6)(a) Two adults were employed to work directly with children under the Access and Inclusion model. (AIM)scheme.</p> <p>(7)(a) The registered provider ensured that the employee was appropriately supervised and provided with necessary training, in relation to the following: (a) The policies, procedures and statements of the service specified in Schedule 5. Evidence reviewed demonstrated that staff were trained in infection control was available.</p>
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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:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The registered provider ensured that the required written policies procedures and statements specified in schedule 5 were in place in the service. A site-specific Infection Control Policy in line with HPSC (Health Protection Surveillance Centre) Guidance for Settings Providing Childcare during the Covid-19 Pandemic was in place. The hand washing policy and practices observed in the service reflected Covid-19 requirements. Cleaning schedules and a cleaning rota were maintained and were open for inspection. A revised system of cleaning and a system of toy and equipment rotation had been devised and was being implemented daily. Early Years Services Self-Assessment Checklist, staff Covid-19 declaration statement, protocol for visitors and return to work safety protocol were in place and completed as required. Parents and guardians were provided with updated information on Covid-19 requirements via email. An Incident plan with Covid- 19 information had been devised for the service. Procedure for drop off and collection of children attending in line with Covid-19 requirements was in place. Parents and guardians were provided with updated information on Covid- 19 requirements via email and were updated as required. Return to work and childcares return to preschool forms were completed in respect of staff and children. The inspector completed an Information form prior to commencement of the inspection.
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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:

- (1)
The minimum ratio of adults to children was exceeded during the inspection.
- (3)
There were twenty - four children attending the service being supervised by five adults in addition to the registered provider. Two play pods were in place.
- Pod 1, Playroom 1. This pod accommodated six children aged 2 years 11 months to 3 years of age, who were being cared for by 2 staff members.
 - Pod 2, Playroom 2. This pod accommodated 18 children aged 3-4 years, who were being cared for by 3 staff members.
- (8)(c)
Not applicable as the service does not operate single handedly.



Regulation 19 - Health, Welfare and Development of Child

- (1) *A registered provider shall, in providing a pre-school service, ensure that—*



Regulation 19 - Health, Welfare and Development of Child

(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:

(1)(a)

BASIC NEEDS:

- Parents provided the children's snack, in keeping with the service's healthy eating policy. Lunches included a selection of home-made sandwiches, yogurts, and fresh fruit. Children brought in their own individual water bottles. Water was freely available in the setting.
- The registered provider had ensured that an individually devised activity-based program of care was in place to enable each child to participate at their own ability and at their own pace.
- Children were encouraged to be self-caring and independent and to take care of their own bags, coats, and lunch boxes. Hand washing was supported by staff and children were gently reminded to wash their hands.

SUPPORTING RELATIONSHIPS:

- Parental involvement in the service was encouraged, through the following methods: verbal handover to parents and guardians on collection and information updates via messaging system (SMS), parent's handbook, email and one to one telephone calls as required. A regular newsletter was issued to parents/guardians. Social media platforms were also used for communication. The service worked in partnership with parents and should a parent wish to update themselves on their child's progress, a one-to-one meeting could be arranged with the registered provider.
- A calm and relaxed atmosphere was observed. The staff encouraged children to lead their own play and children were observed playing together in small groups and as individual players.
- Children requiring extra support and supervision were assisted by staff.

PHYSICAL AND MATERIAL ENVIRONMENT:

- Indoors the playrooms were laid out to accommodate the needs of the children and facilitate freedom of movement. They offered areas of defined interest included a home area, a cosy rest area with book corner and a dress up and construction area. The model farm and farm animals reflected children's sense of belonging in this rural setting and in the farming community. Other materials included blocks, bricks, jigsaws, cars, books, construction toys, dolls, arts and crafts equipment, paints, and crayons. The indoor and outdoor environments provided a full range of developmentally appropriate, creative, and enriching experiences for all children.
- The outdoor play area was extensive, multi surfaced and was equipped with climbing equipment, slides, mud kitchens, music wall, swings, and a potting area. The selection of wall mirrors offered opportunity to children to reflect their own images and learn to see from different angles and to explore

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Regulation 19 - Health, Welfare and Development of Child

reflection of outdoor light, learning how different objects appear when reflected. Art easels were available for children to use and the blackboarded areas with coloured chalk on hand were much in demand.

- The roofed, lean-to area was well utilized by children during the course of the inspection and provided shelter from the wind. The children had named this area the “outdoor/indoor classroom”.
- A sensory garden was positioned at the front of the service. This space offered an environment to explore every stimulus and boost sensory development. In this garden grew colourful plants and shrubs that were appealing to the senses, provided different textures and diversity to the 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:

- The entry to the service was secure to ensure the safety of the children within. The outdoor play area was securely fenced.
- All cleaning, sanitising products and equipment were stored out of reach of children.
- A daily record was maintained of all children attending the service and the staff present.

INFECTION CONTROL:

- The premises was maintained in a clean and hygienic condition. All toys and materials were easily cleanable and cleaning schedules were available and reviewed.
- Adequate supplies of hot water, hand paper towels and liquid soap was available in the sanitary accommodation.
- Hand sanitiser was available in a wall mounted unit at the entrance to the pre-school, at the entrance to the outdoor play area and in the pre-school rooms. Personal protective equipment that included face masks, aprons and gloves were available in plastic container in the outdoor play area.
- The service was well ventilated, and windows were opened throughout the inspection. A new system of air filtration had been put in place with a free-standing filtrating unit in each playroom
- An area was identified for isolation of a child or person feeling unwell in the sheltered decking area. Covid-19 signage was noted at the entrance to the service.

ADMINISTRATION OF MEDICATION:

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 23 - Safeguarding Health, Safety and Welfare of child

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No medicine was administered at the time of the inspection. A protocol was in place for the administration of medication. <p>SAFE SLEEP:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cosy rest areas were provided if required for a child to relax in the rooms. <p>FIRE SAFETY:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A fire assembly point was noted at the back of the service. Fire exits were unobstructed in the service.
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Part VI - Safety

Regulation 25 - First Aid

<p>(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.</p> <p>(2) A registered provider shall ensure that a suitably equipped first aid box for children—</p> <p>(a) is safely stored in an easily accessible and conspicuous position on the premises, and</p> <p>(b) is available to the children attending the pre-school service at all times.</p>	
Compliance Information:	<p>(1) Adults qualified in First Aid Response (FAR) were available on the premises.</p> <p>(2)(a) A fully equipped first aid box was available in an accessible and conspicuous location in the service.</p> <p>(b) A first aid box was available for use in the service. A first aid box was brought out to the outdoor area when children were playing outdoors.</p>

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 26 - Fire Safety Measures

<p>(1) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of—</p> <p>(a) any fire drill that takes place in the premises, and</p> <p>(b) the number, type and maintenance record of firefighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises</p> <p>(4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of fire shall be displayed in a conspicuous position in the premises</p>	
Compliance Information:	<p>(1)(a) A written record for the completed monthly fire drills was available on the premises. The last recorded fire drill took place on the 12.01.2022.</p> <p>(b)</p>

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 26 - Fire Safety Measures

A record was available demonstrating the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms on the premises. The firefighting equipment and smoke alarms were serviced on 21.11.21.

(4)

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