

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CC154
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Name of Service:	First Steps Creche
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Address of Service:	4 Marrick, Halycon Drive, Silversprings, Co Cork
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Eircode:	T23 RY89
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Name of Registered Provider:	Rosaleen Cotter
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	08/06/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	22	PM	22
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Tusla Early Years Inspectorate, 13 Market Square, Mallow, Co Cork, P51 DD5Y
Inspection undertaken by:	N O'Donoghue & D Prendergast
Title:	Early Years Inspectors

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).

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Description of service

First Steps Creche is a privately owned full day care service in operation since 2002. It is registered to accommodate children aged 1 to 6 years. Also includes children attending the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme. The current opening hours are from 8.00am to 6.00pm each day Monday to Friday.

The service is located on the ground floor of a converted, detached, two storey house, located in a residential estate in Silversprings, Cork.

The service consists of two playrooms, a Wobbler/Toddler room and a Pre-school room. There is an entrance hall, combined office and staff room, a storeroom that stores cots and individual sleeping floor mats when not in use. There is one designated adult toilet, two children's toilets, one nappy changing facility and a sluice room. The service has a secure, partially covered outdoor play area located beside the premises.

Staffing

There were five adults attached to the service. All five adults work directly with the children, including the registered provider, deputy person in charge and early years educators. One student was present on day of inspection completing their work placement.

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.

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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 inspectors wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, deputy person in charge, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

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*

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(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.

(3) The procedures specified in paragraph (2) shall be carried out prior to any person being appointed, assigned or allowed access to or contact with a child attending the pre-school service.

(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.

Compliance Information

(1)

(a) The service had a designated person in charge and deputy person in charge on the premises on the day of inspection.

(b) Through a review of the roster and staff sign in, it was determined that a person in charge or named deputy person in charge were on the premises at all times during the operation of the service.

(2) Five adults were attached to the service; through discussion with the registered provider and review of previous inspection, it was identified that two new adults were appointed since last inspection. Of the two new adults, one adult was employed as an early years educator and one adult was present as a student on work placement. These two new files were open to inspection. One garda vetting disclosure was identified for renewal from previous inspection, this was also open to inspection.

(a) Of the four references required, one validated reference was from a past employer.

(b) Of the four references required, one validated reference was from a source other than a past employer.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all adults carried out by the registered provider. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) Police vetting was deemed to be required for both of the two new adults working in the service. All required documentation was available and on file for both adults.

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(4) All adults working directly with the preschool children held relevant qualifications in Early Childhood Care and Education at least at Level 5 on the National Qualifications Framework.

Non-Compliance Information

- (2)
- (a) & (b) Two validated references were not available in respect of one adult in the service.
- (3) The registered provider did not conduct all procedures specified under paragraph (2) prior to any person being appointed, assigned or allowed access to or contact with a child attending the pre-school service. This posed a risk that unsuitable adults may have had contact or access to children.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

- (2)
- (a) & (b) The registered provider received the references and will ensure that all references are received prior to commencement of employment to the service. The adult no longer works in the service.
- (3) The registered provider stated that all checks will be carried out prior to any adult commencing in the service.

Supporting documentation submitted

- (2)
- (a) & (b) Evidence of references were forwarded to the Early Years Inspectorate.
- (3) The registered provider's statement was accepted by the Early Years Inspectorate.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The noncompliance's identified under Regulation 9 have been adequately addressed.

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.*
- (2) Subject to paragraphs (4) and (5), a registered provider of a full day care service or a part-time day care service shall ensure that at all times the minimum ratio of adults to children specified in column (3) of Part 1 of Schedule 6*

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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)-

(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 registered provider ensured there was an adequate number of adults available to the children.

(2) The adult child ratios met the requirements of the regulation during the morning of the inspection:

- In the Pre-school room, there were 2 adults working directly with 14 children, who were aged 2 to 5 years, all attending full day care.
- In the Wobbler/Toddler room, there was two adults working directly with eight children, aged between 1 year and 1 month and 2 years and 3 months, all attending full day care. In addition to this, one student was present on placement.

(8)

(a) From review of staff roster and staff sign in, it was evident that at least two adults were present on the premises at all times.

Non-Compliance Information

(2) The required ratios were not maintained in the Pre-school room during a staff member's lunch break, as follows:

- There was 1 adult working directly with 14 children; 10 of these children were aged 3 to 5 years and 4 of the children were aged 2 to 3 years. The adult child ratio for children aged 3 to 5 years is 1:8 and a ratio of 1:6 is required for children aged 2 to 3 years.

Non-compliance in relation to adult child ratios was also noted at the previous three inspections, on 1 October 2025, 29 April 2025 and 23 May 2024.

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Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The registered provider had advertised an active post available within the service. A new staff member has been employed in the service. The registered provider will advertise relief positions in the service to ensure that staff cover will be met at all times.

Supporting documentation submitted

The registered provider's statement was accepted by the Early Years Inspectorate.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the corrective and preventive actions submitted. The noncompliance identified under Regulation 11 (2) has been adequately addressed.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 16 – Record in relation to pre-school service

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of the following information in relation to the service:

- (i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;*
- (j) details of any medication administered to a pre-school child attending the service with signed parental consent;*

Compliance Information

(1)

(i) A copy of the staff roster and staff sign in was available from 05 May 2026 to 08 June 2026. All required information was available.

Non-Compliance Information

(j) A review of administration of medication forms in the Wobbler/Toddler room were made available to the inspector. Four records were available from January 2026 to date of inspection. Of the four records available, one record did not detail the signature of a witness. This posed a risk that incorrect medication may be administered if not witnessed by another staff member. This was found as a non-compliance on previous inspection on 01 October 2025.

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Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The registered provider reminded staff the importance of completing all paperwork when administering medication. This will be monitored going forward.

Supporting documentation submitted

The registered provider's statement was accepted by the Early Years Inspectorate.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The noncompliance identified under Regulation 16(j) has been adequately addressed.

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)

Basic needs:

- Regular meals and snacks were provided for the children throughout the day; the deputy stated that breakfast is served on arrival, the mid-morning snack was usually facilitated between 10.00am and 10.30am, lunch was offered between 12.00pm and 12.20pm, followed by a 3.00pm snack and an evening snack, at approximately 5.00pm.
- In the Pre-school room, the children's reusable water bottles were stored at a level that was accessible to them.
- Toilet trained children had access to adjoining sanitary facilities, which they were supported to use in an independent manner.
- Any child who wished to rest or relax in the Pre-school room and Wobbler/Toddler room could avail of a quiet corner, with access to a variety of books.

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Supporting relationships:

- Calm tones of voice were adopted by staff, as they assisted and guided the children in their activities.
- During an observed adult led activity in the Pre-school room, the children appeared engaged and their efforts were acknowledged by the staff member.
- The inspector was advised that in-person communication at arrival and collection times, was predominantly used to share information with parents.

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

- The children's meals and snacks were supplied by their parents or caregivers.
- At the time of inspection, the mid-morning snack in the Pre-school room consisted of a selection of fruit. Hot lunches included stew, chicken with rice, and sausages with beans and mashed potato. The mid-morning snack in the Wobbler/Toddler room consisted of yoghurts and fruit. The hot meals observed included chicken curry and rice, pasta and meat, mashed potato and vegetables.
- The inspector was advised that none of the children had any food intolerances or allergies.
- During discussion, a staff member confirmed that if a child were to express hunger outside of routine mealtimes, they would be accommodated to have a snack from their lunch box.

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 outdoor play spaces were enclosed by high-level walls and a secured gate.
- The windows in the care rooms were adequately secured to ensure the safety of the children.

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- Visibility strips were observed on low laying windows.
- Emergency exit doors were clear from obstruction.

Infection control:

- The care rooms were adequately ventilated through open windows.
- Liquid soap, paper towels and foot pedal operated bins were provided at the wash hand basins. It was noted that the children washed their hands after outdoor play, after using the toilet and before eating.
- In both care rooms, photograph labelled wall hook storage was in use for the children's belongings.
- Cots were fitted with waterproof mattresses and placed 50cm apart.

Administration of medication:

- No administration of medication was observed on the day of inspection. Discussion with staff ensured staff were aware of the correct process for administering medication in the event it was required.

Safe sleep:

- Children had assigned cots in the Wobbler/Toddler room. There was a total of five cots for children under 2 years and three floor mats available for children over 2 years.
- Staff were observed conducting 10-minute sleep checks on children under 2 years in cots. A record of these sleep checks was available on day of inspection.
- Constant supervision of children aged over 2 years sleeping on floor mats was observed.

Fire safety:

- Fire exit signage was illuminated.
- Fire exits were clear of any obstruction and were clearly identified in each room.
- Fire equipment was available in the event it was required.

Non-Compliance Information

Infection control:

1. In the sanitary facility adjacent to the Pre-school room, the children did not have access to warm running water, which may impede effective handwashing.

Administration of medication:

2. The expiry date had passed on one of the medications that was held at the service. This posed a risk that expired medication could be administered to a child.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

Infection control:

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1. The registered provider adjusted the water temperatures in the Preschool room. This will be monitored by staff going forward.

Administration of medication:

2. The registered provider reminded staff to check dates of medication prior to administering it. A new record with dates of children's medications is now kept on file and will be reviewed monthly.

Supporting documentation submitted

Infection control:

1. The registered provider's statement was accepted by the Early Years Inspectorate.

Administration of medication:

2. The registered provider's statement and photographic evidence was accepted by the Early Years Inspectorate.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The noncompliance's identified under Regulation 23 has been adequately addressed.

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) (1) The registered provider ensured that staff trained in First Aid Response (FAR) were at all times immediately available to the children. This was evident through the staff sign in records.

(2)

(a) The service had a first aid kit, which was maintained out of the children's reach.

(b) The first aid supplies were readily available at all times.

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Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-

- (d) cleaned, maintained and repaired, as required, and*
- (e) equipped with adequate and suitable sanitary facilities.*

Compliance Information

(e) Adequate and suitable sanitary facilities were in place. There were two partitioned toilets and two wash hand basins available in the sanitary facility adjacent to the Pre-school room. The nappy changing facility consisted of one nappy changing unit and two sinks. This facility was used by the Wobbler/Toddler room.

Non-Compliance Information

(d) The flooring in the area that provided access to the office/kitchen and children's sanitary facilities, was maintained in poor repair. A section of the flooring was missing, and the flooring itself was lifting, which posed as a potential trip hazard. It was acknowledged that the registered provider was aware of this issue and advised the inspectors that steps had been taken to have the flooring replaced.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The registered provider ensured the flooring was repaired and will be reviewed regularly.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence was forwarded to the Early Years Inspectorate.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The noncompliance identified under Regulation 29 (d) has been adequately addressed.