

TUSLA REGULATORY INSPECTION REPORT

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CC155
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Name of Service:	First Steps Creche
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Address of Service:	Tir Cluain, Knockgriffin, Mill Road, Midleton, Co Cork P25 KP66
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Name of Registered Service Provider:	Rosaleen Cotter
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Type of Service Registered:	Full Day Care	✓
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Date of Inspection:	0	2	1	1	2	0	2	2
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No of Pre-School Children present during Inspection:	AM	29	PM	29
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate Administration Building St Mary's Health Campus Gurranabraher Cork T23X440
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Inspection undertaken by:	Ms. M O'Reilly
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

12th May 2022

1. Pursuant to Part VI, Regulation 23, the Agency is supplied (no later than February 28th, 2023) with the information required to provide assurance that the service is compliant with the state required fire safety and building control measures.
2. In the interim and without delay you put in place a robust safety plan to ensure that the current absence of fire safety confirmation poses no risk to children who attend your service. This plan must be in written format and available for inspection.

And

1. Pursuant to Part VII, Regulation 29, the Agency is supplied (no later than February 28th, 2023) with the information required to provide assurance that your premises has attained the state required planning permission to confirm suitability as a preschool service and that you are compliant with the terms of that permission.
2. Alternatively provide evidence that your premises in accordance with state planning legislation and policy, is confirmed as otherwise exempt.

Description of Service	First Steps Crèche is a privately operated early years service in operation since 2009. This service is registered to cater for children from 0 to 6 years offering a choice of sessional, part time or full day care service and the children attending the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme. The current opening hours are from 07:15 to 18:15 hours each day Monday to Friday. First Steps Crèche operates from a purpose-built childcare facility located on the entrance to a suburban residential estate in the outskirts of Middleton town, Co Cork. There were five rooms located on the ground floor in operation on day of inspection: a wobbler, a toddler, playpod 1 and Montessori room. One room was catering for school aged care children. There is one other room on the first floor that caters for school aged care children. This room was not in operation at time of inspection. The registered provider stated that the baby room is not in operation for a number of months due to the difficulties in recruiting due to the shortage of childcare staff. The registered provider stated that there are only two children under 12 months attending the service, she was accommodating the children of staff that work in the service. The service has one separate designated sleep room. Adequate children's toilets and nappy changing facilities. The outdoor play area is located to the rear and side of the facility. The wobbler and toddler rooms have a separate designated outdoor play area to the play pod 1 room, Montessori room and school aged care rooms who have their own separate designated outdoor play areas.
Staffing	There was a total of 14 staff. On the day of the inspection there were 10 staff present in the service in the morning and 11 adults present in the afternoon. Of these, 10 adults were working directly with the children. The registered provider is serviced based. The staff working directly with the early years children all hold a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education
Methodology	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. Inspections of early years services are planned based on the following: • Previous inspection history • Any information received in relation to the service 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. Inspections may also focus on other areas as required.

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.

Additional Information

- Following requirements not met for Reregistration 2019, the following conditions were applied on 12th May 2022:

1. Pursuant to Part VI, Regulation 23, the Agency is supplied (no later than February 28th, 2023) with the information required to provide assurance that the service is compliant with the state required fire safety and building control measures.

2. In the interim and without delay you put in place a robust safety plan to ensure that the current absence of fire safety confirmation poses no risk to children who attend your service. This plan must be in written format and available for inspection.

And

1. Pursuant to Part VII, Regulation 29, the Agency is supplied (no later than February 28th, 2023) with the information required to provide assurance that your premises has attained the state required planning permission to confirm suitability as a preschool service and that you are compliant with the terms of that permission.

2. Alternatively provide evidence that your premises in accordance with state planning legislation and policy, is confirmed as otherwise exempt.

- Following inspection on 2nd December 2021, conditions were placed on the registration of this service under Part III, Article (9) & Part VI, (23) Child Care Act 1991 Early Years Regulations 2016.

	1. These conditions were the subject of review at this inspection, and the findings relating to this are demonstrated throughout the report. These conditions have expired on 3 rd December 2022.
Acknowledgments	The inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider/person in charge, deputy, 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
 - (c) there is a clear management structure in the service that identifies the lines of authority and accountability in the service and the specific roles and responsibilities of each employee and unpaid worker.
- (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.
- (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) There was a named designated person in charge and a named person to deputise as required.
 - (b) The named person in charge and the newly appointed deputy were present when the inspector arrived on the premises and remained for the duration of the inspection.
 - (c) There was a record on display on the entrance hall of the service with the name of the person in charge, a named deputy and a named relief deputy.
- (2)
- 9 staff members had been employed in the service since the last inspection on 2nd December 2022. These 9 staff files were the subject of review at this inspection.
- (2)
- (a) There were 17 validated references on file from past employers in respect of the 9 adults.
 - (b) There were 2 validated references on file from sources other than previous employers.
 - (c) A completed Garda vetting disclosure was received for the 9 adults.

(d) Two of the three police vetting records were available on file in relation to two adults who had worked outside the jurisdiction for a period of longer than six consecutive months.

Personal Identification in the form of a driving licence or passport was available in respect of each of the adults.

Curriculum Vitae were available in respect of each of the adults.

(4)

Eight of the nine adults that worked directly with the children held a major award ranging from a Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) Level 5 to a level 7 degree in Early Childhood Care and Education. There was one staff member who did not have a recognized childcare qualification and the staff member was rostered to work with school aged care children in the breakfast club in the morning and in the school aged care service rooms.

Non-compliance information

A condition had been applied to the registration of the service that a checklist for each new staff member would be complete to ensure all staff members have completed all requirements for employment prior to having access to children in the service.

(2)

(a, b) There was one adult with one reference on file when two validated references are required.

(d)

There were no police vetting record available on file in relation to one adult who had lived outside the jurisdiction for 6 consecutive months or more while over the age of 18 years.

(3) Despite the registered provider stating the recruitment checklists were being implemented in the service, there were two staff in the service working directly with the children without the required checks being complete. Therefore, the Registered Provider had not ensured that each adult working with the children was suitable and competent to do so prior to their being allowed access to the children.

(4)

Evidence was unavailable to demonstrate that the qualification held by one adult met the minimum requirement of a level 5 award in Early Childhood Care and Education.

Corrective & preventive action submitted by the registered provider

Corrective and preventive action

(2)

(a) +(b)

A validated reference for the respective adult was forwarded.

(d) No longer applicable as the registered provider confirmed in writing that the staff member was working in another country for 3 months in 2019 and not 12 consecutive months as previously indicated in the curriculum vitae reviewed by the inspectorate on day of inspection. There was a misprint on the dates recorded on the curriculum vitae by the staff member. An updated curriculum was forwarded and deemed satisfactory.

A vetting checklist for each new staff member will be completed to ensure all the required vetting records are in place prior to commencing in the service.

	The registered provider has also stated that the vetting records of all current staff have been rechecked and will be reviewed on an annual basis (4) The registered provider received correspondence from the college stating the respective staff member had completed a childcare qualification Level 5 in Early Childhood Care and Education. <u>Supporting documentation submitted</u> (2) (a) +(b) A copy of a written validated reference on one staff member were submitted and deemed satisfactory. (d) No longer applicable as the staff member was not working or living in another country for 6 consecutive months or more while over the age of 18 years. A police vetting record was therefore not required. (4) A copy of the childcare qualification award record Level 5 in Early Childhood Care and Education was submitted with the Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) approved stamp on the record.
Summary comment	The written response and photographic evidence received was examined and deemed to meet the requirements of Regulation 9 (2)(a), (b),(d) and (4) of the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016. This will be reviewed at the next inspection.

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

- A recruitment policy was in place specifying the procedure to be followed when hiring staff and unpaid workers.
- A risk management policy was in place which identified any potential risks and the controls required to reduce or eliminate the risk. Monthly risk assessment records were available on file regarding the indoor and outdoor setting.

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 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.

Without prejudice to paragraphs (2) to (7)-

(8)

- (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 person in charge ensured that there were an adequate number of adults working directly with the children.

(2) On the day of the inspection there were 9 adults working in the morning and 10 staff in the afternoon across the 5 care rooms. The deputy was covering staff for lunch breaks. There were 29 early years children, and 15 school aged children present across the 5 care rooms in operation

During the period of inspection, the ratio of staff to children was maintained as per the regulations and an adequate number of adults were working directly with the children in each care room.

Baby room

Not in operation at time of inspection

Wobbler room

There were 4 children in attendance on day of inspection. There was 1 child under 12 months and 3 were aged between 1 and 2 years with 2 adults in attendance.

Toddler room

There were 10 children aged between 18 months and 2 years 6 months with 2 adults in attendance. There were 5 children aged under 2 years and 5 children aged over 2 years.

Montessori Room

There were 6 children aged 3 years and over with 1 adult in attendance.

Play pod Room

There were 9 children aged between 2 years 8 months and 6 years with 2 adults in attendance.

School Aged Care Room (ground floor)

There were 15 children with 2 adults in attendance in the morning and with 3 adults in attendance in the afternoon.

School Aged Care Room (first floor)

Second school aged care service was not in operation at time of inspection

(8)

(a) There were at least 2 adults on the premises at all times while the service is in operation.

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

BASIC NEEDS:

- The service promoted healthy eating and food and snacks were provided at regular intervals during the day. Breakfast was provided on arrival and up to 9am. Midmorning snack was provided between 10 and 10:30am. Lunch was between 12 and 12:30pm and mid-afternoon snack was provided between 3 and 3:30pm. Young children were observed to have the opportunity to feed themselves appropriate to the age and stage of development.
- Children's toileting and hygiene needs were promptly and sensitively attended to. Self-toileting by the older children was encouraged. Children in nappies were attended to regularly.
- Hand washing observed by the children was supported and encouraged prior to eating, post toileting and messy play.
- Children had sufficient space to move about freely indoors. Due to the bad weather present on day of inspection children were not observed playing outdoors.

SUPPORTING RELATIONSHIPS AROUND CHILDREN:

- During mealtimes staff members were observed to sit at the tables and engage in social conversation with the children promoting a relaxed atmosphere. A staff member was observed to hold and interact positively with a child during a bottle feed. The staff members sat at the children's level when feeding the younger children or when assisting the children to feed.
- The service used a software technology application (an App) to provide information to parents in relation to daily update on eating, nappy changing activities and sleep checks.
- The adults were observed interacting and assisting the children in play and encouraging them to interact with each other.

PHYSICAL AND MATERIAL ENVIRONMENT:

- The Montessori and play pod 1 room had a range of play-based materials and specialist Montessori equipment that offered stimulation, exploration, and imagination. They were positioned at an accessible level on open shelving which nurtured independence, facilitated choice, and encouraged curiosity, spontaneous play, and movement.

- Colourful, sensory, and age-appropriate play equipment was available to the children between 8 months to 2 years present at time of inspection. Other play equipment available to the children included shape sorters, blocks, handheld toys, and push toys.
- There was large vinyl padded mats in the Wobbler and Toddler rooms that children could sit or lie and relax or when they wanted to opt out of an activity.

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

On day of inspection the food and drink provided by the service for the mid-morning snack and lunch time meal were observed to be healthy and nutritious with age-appropriate size quantities for or example freshly cut fruit such as bananas, apple and orange and water to drink was served for the mid-morning snack. Beef lasagne was served to the children at lunch time with water to drink. Crackers, cheese, and fruit was served for the mid-afternoon food break.

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:

- Access to the main entrance door was adequately secured that prevented unauthorised access by an unauthorised person or exit by a child.
- Each internal door was suitably secured to prevent the children gaining access to unsupervised areas such as the kitchen and adult toilets.
- The play materials, resources and equipment were in a satisfactory condition.

Infection control:

- Playrooms and communal areas were adequately ventilated by both natural and mechanical forms of ventilation.
- Personal waste including used tissues and all cleaning waste was appropriately disposed of in foot operated pedal bins in each room of the service.
- The children had access to sufficient toilets, wash hand basins and nappy changing facilities.
- The adults had their own designated toilets.
- A supply of liquid soap, paper towels, and bins for disposal of paper towels were available throughout the service.
- A written cleaning record was available where high contact areas were regularly cleaned daily.
- A supply of cleaning agents and equipment was available in each room of the service.

Safe sleep:

- The children's rest needs were facilitated in one designated sleep room for the children in the wobbler room. There were adequate numbers of standard cots with supported well-fitting safety mattresses for children under two that required a sleep with individual accompanying bed linen.
- There were 5 children under two years in the Toddler room. Foldable cots were rolled into the Toddler room after lunch and the playroom became a sleep room for a period of time. The 5 children over 2 years in the Toddler Rooms rest needs were met during a planned sleeping period when stacking beds were set up in the Toddler room. There were a sufficient number of stacking beds available with designated suitable bed linen for each child over 2 years who wanted a sleep while attending the service.
- Each playroom had a rest area.

	Fire safety: - A record of monthly fire drills was presented for examination. - All fire exits were noted to be free from obstruction.
Non-compliance information	General safety: The Registered provider has conditions applied to this service that the following would be completed within the service: - The registered provider must implement a risk assessment system outlining the process of risk identification, staff roles and responsibilities, the controls/ mitigation of identified risks in a timely manner. The risk assessments must be reviewed regularly and updated as required. - The premises is regularly assessed for all repair and maintenance works required and all required works are carried out in a timely manner. Despite monthly risk assessments and checklists being carried out by the service, and being available on inspection, the issues outlined in the following points 2-4 had not been identified as risks. No record for repair work to address points 2-4 been identified in any risk assessment or checklist. The measures taken by the registered provider to assess and manage risks and repair work had been ineffective in these instances in addressing the following issues. - One of the storage units for storing bikes and scooters located in the outdoor play area for the Montessori Room was in a poor state of repair and could collapse to the ground as observed on day of inspection. This storage unit had the potential risk of causing injury to a child if the unit collapsed on top of them. - The timber fence separating the outdoor play areas for play pod 1 room and the Montessori room was in some parts of the fence in a poor state of repair and was not provided with a smooth durable easily cleanable surface. Infection control: - On the Inspector's arrival to the service, it was observed there was no thermostatically controlled hot water available for hygienic hand washing in the wash hand basins in the children's nappy changing and toilets facilities in the Wobbler and Toddler rooms. When brought to the attention of staff, the staff member assigned to turn on the control each morning stated they had forgotten to turn on the control button. The Inspectorate checked the water again 30 minutes after control switch was turned on and there was thermostatically controlled hot water available in the wash hand basins. Several hours later, in the afternoon the inspectorate checked the water again in the wash hand basins in the children's nappy changing and toilet facilities in the Wobbler and Toddler rooms and in the Play pod 1 room, there was no thermostatically controlled hot water.

	The hot water supply to children's wash-hand basins must be spontaneous and thermostatically controlled to 43°C or lower to ensure hygienic hand washing at all times while the service is in operation. The issue of no thermostatically controlled hot water available was found in the last inspection dated the 02/12/21 and the registered provider stated in the corrective and preventative action reply (CAPA) response that a Plumber was called, and the issue was corrected. However, it was found on this inspection that this issue persists in some areas in the service.
Corrective & preventive action submitted by the registered provider	<u>Corrective and preventive action</u> General safety: 1. Daily safety and infection control checklists have been implemented that the person in charge in each room completes at the start of each day and reports to management any findings that need to be addressed. There are monthly recorded risk assessments now taking place of equipment, facilities and premises in the indoor and outdoor areas. 2. The storage unit for storing bikes and scooters located in the outdoor play area for the Montessori Room has been removed. 3. The timber fence separating the outdoor play areas for Play pod 1 room and the Montessori room has been removed. The two playrooms now have a rotation system in place between the two rooms when children are playing in the outdoor play area. Infection control: 4. Following the inspection, a new boiler was purchased following a review by a plumber. There is thermostatically controlled hot water available for hygienic hand washing in the wash hand basins in the children's nappy changing and toilets facilities in the Wobbler and Toddler rooms. The daily checklists now include times that the hot water in the wash hand basins in each room is checked throughout the day. This will ensure that management are immediately informed on finding if there is a water issue in any area of the service and corrected as soon as possible reducing the potential risk of cross infection. <u>Supporting documentation submitted</u> 1. • A copy of the signed daily safety and infection control daily checklists were submitted. • A copy of the monthly risk assessments were submitted. 2. Photographic evidence of the area where the old storage unit was located and there is now a clear floor space was submitted. 3. Photographic evidence showing that the timber fence between the two outdoor play areas had been removed was submitted. 4. Cost invoice from the Plumber
Summary comment	Correspondence and records received were examined and deemed to meet the requirement of Regulation 23 non compliances 1- 4 inclusive of the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016. This will be reviewed at the next inspection.

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) Two staff held certified, up to date First Aid Responder (FAR) training certificates.
- (2) (a) There were sufficiently stocked first aid box available in the service, which was safely stored out of reach of children.
- (b) At all times when the service was in operation, first aid supplies were accessible to adults if in the event that a child may require treatment.

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 record of monthly fire drills carried out was available and indicated that the last fire drill took place in November 22.
 - (b) A record of the number, type and maintenance record of firefighting equipment was maintained. It was recorded that the fire equipment and the emergency fire alarm system was last tested and serviced in February 2022.
- (4)
- The fire evacuation procedure for the service which contained details in relation to the procedure to be followed in the event of a fire was displayed in the service.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance information

The service has certification to confirm insurance cover for a total of 120 children in the service. Insurance cover expires on the 27/03/2023.