

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015DY127				
Name of Service:	Little Steps				
Address of Service:	Artane Castle Shopping Centre, Artane, Dublin 5.				
Eircode:	D05 X4A8				
Name of Registered Provider:	Paula Harrison				
Service type:	Sessional				
Date of Inspection:	11/06/2026				
No of pre-school children:	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>AM</td> <td>23</td> <td>PM</td> <td>N/A</td> </tr> </table>	AM	23	PM	N/A
AM	23	PM	N/A		
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Floor 7 Brunel Building, Heuston South Quarter, St. John's Road West, Kilmainham, Dublin 8.				
Inspection undertaken by:	L.A Webster				
Title:	Early Years Inspector				

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

Little Steps Pre-school is a privately operated sessional preschool service located in Artane Castle Shopping Centre in Dublin 5. The service caters for children aged 2-5 years old. The service participates in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme and operates two sessions daily; the morning session runs from 9am-12pm followed by an afternoon session which runs from 12:30pm-3:30pm. The service is comprised of one large care room which is divided into 2 separate rooms namely Room 1 and Room 2. Additionally, there are sanitary facilities, a kitchen, and a small outdoor area to the rear of the service.

Staffing

The registered provider works within the service and employs five staff to work directly with the children. On the day of inspection there were four staff present including the deputy person in charge and three adults working directly with the children.

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 and safety. The inspection 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

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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 inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the 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*
- (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*

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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 a named person to deputise as required.
 - (b) The deputy person in charge was present within the service when the inspector arrived and remained within the service for the duration of the inspection.
 - (c) There was a clear management structure in place, and this was evidenced through discussion with staff.
- (2) A review of paperwork and discussion with the deputy person in charge showed that there are currently five staff employed by the registered provider to work within the service. The files of two new staff members who had commenced employment following the previous inspection on the 11 November 2024 were reviewed. Garda vetting disclosures were reviewed for all staff that are currently employed within the service.
- (a) There were 4 written and validated references available from past employers.
 - (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all five staff members. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
- (4) Evidence was available to show that one adult who worked directly with the children held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at a minimum of level 5 on the National Framework of Qualifications, or a qualification that is deemed of equivalence by the minister.

Non-Compliance Information

- (4) Evidence was not available to show that one staff member who worked directly with the children held 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.

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Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(4) Documents have been requested in relation to the staff members qualification. Going forward we will ensure that all documentation is completed and on file.

Supporting documentation submitted

No documentation submitted.

Summary Comment

The registered provider has attempted to address the non-compliance under regulation 9(4) however this remains outstanding. The qualifications must be provided to the inspectorate when obtained.

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) therefore at that reference number is satisfied.

Compliance Information

(1) On the day of inspection, there were 23 children being cared for by four adults throughout the morning.

(3) The adult to child ratios were correct when the inspector arrived unannounced to the service and throughout the inspection. Staff were aware of the required ratios for the age range of the children within the rooms.

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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
- (b) appropriate and suitable care practices are in place in the pre-school service, having regard to the number of children attending the service and the nature of their needs.

Compliance Information

(1)(a)(b)

Basic needs:

- On the day of inspection, children were observed to move freely around the rooms and engage in various types of play activities.
- Children had access to their own individually labelled water bottles.

Supporting Relationships:

- Staff were observed to be kind, caring and respectful with their interactions towards the children, which maintained the happy and relaxed atmosphere of the room.
- Staff consistently communicated with the children through low and calm tones, offering direction to the children when needed. Additionally, staff ensured that comfort was provided to children when needed through gentle touch, a hug or sitting with the children.
- Staff were observed to engage children in conversation about their interests and activities promoting a sense of belonging and identity. Throughout snack time, it was evident that the children were very content and relaxed with the staff. The staff sat with the children and engaged in various conversations and asking open ended questions that demonstrated a strong interest in the children's lives
- Staff promoted play and learning through modes of music and dance rehearsals to prepare for upcoming graduations.

Physical and Material Environment:

- The care room was spacious and decorated with various forms of arts and crafts. There was a clearly designed family wall and birthday wall with pictures of the children's families displayed.
- Play areas were clearly designated including a cosy corner to relax, kitchen area, construction area and art and craft area.

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- Toys were documented as developmentally age appropriate for the children and in good condition.
- Children were observed to play independently with the materials and sought support from staff when needed.

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 entrance to the service was appropriately secured upon the inspector's arrival.
- The care rooms were in good condition, with no visible hazards or trailing wires observed.
- Blind cords were securely attached to the wall and out of reach of children.
- Cleaning agents were stored safely and locked away out of reach of children.
- Shelving units were firmly anchored to the wall to ensure stability and safety.
- The kitchen area was inaccessible to children and the door remained closed throughout the inspection.

Infection Control:

- Upon arrival, it was observed that the service was clean and hygienic and up to date cleaning schedules were available and observed within the care rooms and sanitary facilities.
- Thermostatically controlled warm water, liquid hand soap and wall mounted paper towels were available for appropriate hand-washing practices. Both staff and children were observed to show familiarity with routine handwashing.
- Children's individual lunches brought from home were stored in the refrigerator to prevent any spoiling from perishable items.
- Foot operated pedal bins were in use for the appropriate disposal of waste in the care rooms and sanitary facilities. These were observed to be in good working order.

Fire Safety:

- All fire emergency exit doors were clear from obstruction. This helped ensure the safe effective evacuation of children and staff in the event of an emergency

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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.

Non-Compliance Information

(1) The registered provider did not sure that a person trained in First Aid Responder (FAR) was available and onsite throughout the opening hours of the service. It is acknowledged that a staff member held up to date Paediatric First Aid with an expiry of November 2026.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(1) A second member of staff will be completing FAR training during the summer. Management will ensure that a trained FAR person will be onsite.

Supporting documentation submitted

None submitted.

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventative actions provided by the registered provider are sufficient to address the non-compliance under Regulation 25 and will be reviewed upon the next inspection.

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.

Compliance Information

(1)

(a) The records available demonstrated that fire drills are held monthly within the service and the service conducted a fire drill on the 11 May 2026.

(b) A record was available detailing the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment and smoke alarm systems in the premises.

- Records demonstrate that the firefighting equipment had been serviced annually, with the last service taking place on the 26 March 2026.

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- Records demonstrate that the smoke alarms have been serviced on a quarterly bases with the last service taking place on the 28 April 2026.