

TUSLA REGULATORY INSPECTION REPORT



TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015WW167
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Name of Service:	First Steps Creche and Playschool
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Address of Service:	35 Cluain Ard, Sea Road, Arklow, County Wicklow. Y14YP08
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Email Address:	firststepsarklow@gmail.com
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Name of Registered Service Provider:	Leslie McGrath
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Type of service registered:	Full Day Care ✓
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Date of Inspection:	1	2	0	5	2	0	2	1
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No of Pre-School Children present during Inspection:	AM	31	PM	N/A
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Loughlinstown Health Centre, Loughlinstown Drive, Loughlinstown, Co. Dublin.
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Inspection undertaken by:	S Murray and M Condon
Title:	Inspection Registration Manager and Early Years Inspector

Areas which were the subject of this Inspection		
Governance	And	Safety

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.
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	Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 and Childcare Act 1991 (Early Years Services) (Amendment) Regulations 2016 REF: F09: Version 4: 16.10.2020 1.0	1 of 8
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Description of Service	This service is located in a residential area in Arklow town, County Wicklow. The service is registered to provide a full day care, part time and sessional service for pre-school children. The age range of children catered for in the service is from 1 year to 6 years of age. Childcare services are also provided for school-aged children up to the age of 12 years. The service operates between the hours of 08:00 and 18:00 on a Monday to Friday basis for 52 weeks of the year with the exception of bank holidays and some days between Christmas and the New Year.
Staffing	A total of eleven adults are employed in the service which includes the registered provider. On the day of inspection six adults provided direct care to thirty-one pre-school children. An additional adult was present to provide domestic duties.
Methodology	Tusla's Early Years Inspectorate is the independent statutory regulator of early year's 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 year's services is to ensure that the care, safety and well-being of children attending such services is upheld. The findings on inspection are based on; • Information obtained through examination of documentation • Direct observation • Discussion with relevant staff This inspection was unannounced and carried out when the country was under level 5 restrictions of the Covid-19 Pandemic and services providing full day care or part time care were open for the children of specific groups including essential workers. The inspection focused on the areas of Governance and Safety. The inspection process has been amended to minimise the amount of time that inspectors spend in the service. 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.
Acknowledgements	The inspectors wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

GOVERNANCE

Part III - Management and Staff

Regulation 9 - Management and Recruitment

- (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.
- (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:

There were five new members of staff employed in the service since the last inspection. These files were reviewed on the day of the inspection.

(2) There were two written and validated references available for each employee. In total ten references were reviewed.

(a) There were ten written and validated references from a past employer.

(b) Not applicable as all references were from past employers.

(c) Documentary evidence of a processed Garda Vetting Disclosure was available for the five new staff members.

(d)

Not applicable as no staff member had lived in another state for a period longer than six consecutive months as an adult.

(7)

(a) The adults present on the day of the inspection confirmed to the Inspectors that they had recently completed an on-line course regarding Covid-19 and all staff had revised and updated policies, procedures and statements for the service. Evidence of additional training, for both the registered provider and her staff members, in preparation for reopening following closure due to COVID-19 was viewed by the Inspectors.

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:	Documentary evidence was available of the recently updated policies, procedures and statements of the pre-school service. These were available in hard copy and electronically. The registered provider confirmed that all parents received a copy of the revised policies and procedures via email.
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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*
- (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.*

Compliance Information:	(1) Throughout the inspection there was an adequate number of adults working directly with the pre-school children. (2) The adult/child ratios were maintained throughout the inspection. On Inspection there were six adults providing direct care to thirty-one pre-school children who were divided into two separate pods as follows; <u>Pod 1:</u> Crèche Room Three staff cared for ten pre-school children aged between eighteen months and three years. <u>Pod 2:</u> Pre-school Room Three staff cared for twenty-one pre-school children aged from three years to five years.
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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

Compliance Information:

(1)(a)

Supporting Relationships around Children

- Information was sent to each parent which included the updated policies and procedures introduced to reduce the risk of Covid 19 infection.
- The adults present were observed showing warmth and sensitivity towards all of the children in their care. Children were observed to be very comfortable with the adults present.
- There was evidence that the service worked in partnership with parents. It was stated that a verbal handover on the child's day was now brief in order to reduce the risk of the spread of infection, but all parents had been informed that they could keep in touch using alternative means such as email, texting and phoning. On a daily basis information regarding each child in the Creche room detailing their sleep times, food eaten and activities undertaken was sent to parents using electronic means. A monthly newsletter was issued via email.
- New drop-off and collection procedures were in place. Masks were worn by staff and parents during these times and social distancing was employed to reduce the risk of the spread of infection.

Physical and Material Environment

- The pre-school consists of two pods. Downstairs the Creche room cared for the younger children from one year to three years of age. Upstairs the children aged three years and over were accommodated.
- Each afternoon an additional pod is created when the school-aged children attended. At the time of inspection the pre-school children who attended for sessional care had departed and the pre-school room was sub-divided using a partition.
- An ambient temperature of 18°C was maintained in the care room and the sanitary area.
- The play resources available to the children were accessible, organised and stored on low level shelving which allowed the children to select and replace items and materials of interest.
- There was an adequate amount of age appropriate furniture and equipment available in the rooms. Equipment included Montessori equipment, construction, toy animals, puzzles and a library.
- There was evidence of the children's artwork on display in the rooms.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 19 - Health, Welfare and Development of Child

Outdoor Play

- A secure outdoor area was located at the rear of the premises. It was divided into two sections. A mud kitchen with an assortment of props which also could be used for water play was in one section. In the second section equipment included slides, a play tunnel, basketball net, chalk board and child-sized picnic tables.

Part V I Safety

Regulation 23 - Safeguarding Health, Welfare and Safety and 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:

It was observed that the registered provider has taken the following measures to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of the pre-school children attending the service including:

Infection Control:

- Following the temporary closure of the service due to the Covid 19 pandemic, an alternative drop-off and collection procedure was in place. All parents were requested to wear a mask at drop off and collection times. No adults were permitted to enter the premises.
- An outdoor notice board gave parents written updates regarding Covid 19.
- There were several hand sanitising dispensers positioned around the service including at the entrance, in the care rooms and outdoors.
- Children were encouraged to wash their hands regularly including before lunch and after toileting. Effective hand hygiene practices and good supervision were observed and in accordance with the services infection control policies and procedures.
- The premises play equipment and materials were in a clean and hygienic condition. Up to date cleaning schedules were available in the service.
- A separate area was identified by staff to accommodate a child who is showing symptoms of Covid 19. PPE was available if required.
- The registered provider, when questioned, was familiar with the Covid-19 incident plan and steps to be implemented should a child or staff member becomes unwell while attending the service.
- Natural ventilation was available with openable windows in all care rooms to allow for fresh air exchange throughout the morning.

Part V I Safety

Regulation 23 - Safeguarding Health, Welfare and Safety and of child

General Safety:

- The designated emergency exit doors were clear and unobstructed.
- The cleaning agents were stored on high shelving and were inaccessible to the pre-school children.
- Documentary evidence was available of daily risk assessments being carried out in the service.

Safe Sleep:

- Two standard cots were available to children under two years of age to sleep. Individual bed linen was available. Cots were sanitised if shared between children.
- A sleep log was maintained every 10 minutes detailing the physical checks carried out on sleeping children under 2 years of age. The staff member in the Creche room was familiar with the Safe Sleep Guidelines.

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) An adult trained in first aid for children was present and immediately available to the pre-school children.
- (2)
- (a) The first aid box for children was safely stored in an accessible and conspicuous position in the pre-school room.
 - (b) At all times the first aid box was available to the children attending the pre-school service.

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 in writing was kept of all fire drills that took place in the premises. The last fire drill was recorded on the 19th April 2021.
- (b) Records were available detailing the number, type and maintenance of fire-fighting equipment and smoke alarms both dated October 2020.
- (4) Notices were displayed detailing the procedures to be followed in the event of fire.