

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2024LK004
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Name of Service:	Stepping Stones Preschool
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Address of Service:	St Mary's Boys School, Church Street, Abbeyfeale, Co. Limerick
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Eircode:	V94 DH96
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Name of Registered Provider:	Georgina Lyons
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date(s) of Inspection:	16/06/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	18	PM	No.
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Tusla, Estuary House, Henry St, Limerick
Inspection undertaken by:	E Browne
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

This private sessional service was established in September 2024. It operates a morning session from 09:30hrs – 12:30hrs Monday – Friday for 38 weeks of the year. The service offers a play-based curriculum from a classroom in the national school where the children have access to a pre-school room, sanitary accommodation and facilities for outdoor play

Staffing

The registered provider and 4 additional staff members are working in the service.
All hold a major award in early childhood care and education from level 5 to level 8. The staff had engaged in on-going professional development including first aid training

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.

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-

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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 registered provider, 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*
- (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.

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(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 registered provider responsible for operating the service was present on the day of the inspection. There was a named deputy person available who was able to deputise if required.

(b) During the period of the inspection, the registered provider and the deputy were present and the staff roster indicated that this person or their deputy were always available on the premises.

(c) There was a clear management structure that identified the lines of authority and accountability in the service and the specific roles and responsibilities of each member of the management team.

(2) The files of 5 adults were reviewed on the day of the inspection.

(a) 10 written and validated references were available from past employers.

(b) No references were required from other sources.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures received from the National Vetting Bureau of An Garda Síochána were available for all the 5 staff members employed to work at the service including the registered provider. The Garda vetting for the 5 staff was dated within the last three years.

(d) Police vetting was available for the 1 staff members who had resided outside of Ireland for longer than 6 consecutive months.

(3) All vetting procedures were carried out prior to any person being appointed, assigned or allowed access to or contact with a child attending the pre-school service.

(4) All adults working directly with children held an appropriate qualification in Early Childhood Care and Education or an equivalent such qualification.

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.

Compliance Information

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(1) The registered provider ensured that there was an adequate number of staff members with an appropriate childcare qualification working directly with the preschool children throughout the morning session.

On the day there were 4 staff members present with 18 preschool therefore the adult/child ration was above the minimal requirement.

The registered provider was also available to assist in the playroom if required.

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

Basic Needs:

Children's wellbeing, development and learning was supported and evident during the inspection. There was a healthy eating policy in place. The snacks which were supplied by the parents were observed to be nutritious and varied and consisted of crackers, cheese and a selection of fruit. Bottled water was available in the room should a child become thirsty.

Children's hygiene needs were promptly and sensitively attended to.

Children used the toilet facilities independently or accompanied by a staff member if necessary. Hygienic hand washing was observed to be completed by both children and staff at the wash hand basins in the sanitary accommodation which had a supply of liquid soap, paper hand towels and hot water.

Facilities for quiet time were available in the room if required by children.

Children were allowed to move freely indoors and outdoors from one activity to the next for specific periods of time.

At all times throughout the inspection staff engaged meaningfully with the children, using a gentle tone to provide praise and guidance. During snack time, they sat with the children to create a sociable atmosphere.

Children's behaviour was managed in a competent and positive manner using a problem-solving approach.

Facilities for outdoor play were available and used by the children on the day of the inspection. There was a grass area and patio area containing slides, child sized picnic benches, a farm area, a dinosaur area, sensory area, and flower beds which the children helped plant.

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Adequate and varied play equipment suited to the age and stage of development of the child was available in the service and in the outdoor play area.

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) The registered provider and 3 additional staff held current certifications in first aid responder training (FAR) for children.

(2)(a) A first aid box was stored easily accessible and conspicuous position on the premises.

(b)The first aid box was available at all times if required by a child

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) The fire drills were practiced on a monthly basis. The last recorded fire drill took place on 21/05/2026.

(b)The firefighting equipment was serviced on an annual basis, most recently in March 2026 and a record was maintained of the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment. The smoke alarm in the school premises was serviced in June 2026.

(4)A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire was displayed.

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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-

- (a) of sound and stable structure,*
- (b) safe and secure,*
- (c) kept adequately lit, heated and ventilated*
- (d) cleaned, maintained and repaired, as required, and*
- (e) equipped with adequate and suitable sanitary facilities.*

Compliance Information

- (a) The building appeared to be of sound and stable structure both internally and externally and no obvious defects were noted on inspection.
- (b) The entrance to the service was secured and all visitor access was managed appropriately. The outdoor areas were safe and secured with high walls and fences preventing any unauthorised access to or exit from the areas.
- (c) All areas were well lit by natural light and by artificial light when needed. There was no evidence of mould, mildew, stale smells, stuffiness or condensation.
- (d) All areas inside and outside were well maintained, and routine cleaning schedules were in place for all internal and external areas.
- (e) There were an adequate number of toilets, nappy changing area and wash hand basins in the service for the number of children and adults present each day. A disability access toilet was available if required by a preschool child.