

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CC338
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Name of Service:	Rathcoole Playschool
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Address of Service:	Rathcoole, Mallow, Co Cork
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Eircode:	P51 HF34
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Name of Registered Provider:	Maura Foley
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	02/04/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	10	PM	N/A
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate 13 Market Square Mallow Co Cork P51DD5Y
Inspection undertaken by:	B. Fraher
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).

Conditions if applicable	N/A
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Description of service

Rathcoole Playschool is a privately owned early years service, which is registered to provide sessional care and education to children aged 2 to 6 years. However, it currently accommodates children aged two years and eight months to five and a half years. Daily opening hours are from 9.20am to 12.20pm, each Monday to Friday, over 38 weeks of the year, in conjunction with the Early Childhood Education (ECE) Scheme. The service is in the rural townland of Rathcoole, near Mallow in North Cork. It operates from a single storey extension, at the rear of the registered provider's private dwelling. The purpose-built premises consists of two interconnecting care rooms and both child and adult sanitary facilities. A designated outdoor play space is available to the side and front of the service.

Staffing

A total of five adults are employed at the setting. This includes the registered provider, who no longer works directly with the children but is service based.

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 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 children, registered provider, person in charge and staff 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*
- (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.*

(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 was the designated person in charge of the service but had assigned a second person in charge and a deputy who was available to deputise as required.
 - (b) Both the registered provider and deputy were on duty when the inspector arrived at the service.
- (2) The staff files in relation to five adults who were employed in the service were the subject of the inspection.
- (a) Of the 10 required references, 3 were from previous employers with required records of validation on file.
 - (b) Of the 10 required references, 7 were from another source other than a previous employer with records of validation on file.
 - (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained and were on file for each of the five adults. The service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
 - (d) Police vetting was on file for one staff member who resided outside of the jurisdiction for a period of longer than six consecutive months.
- (4) Records demonstrated that the four adults held a relevant qualification in Early Childhood Care and Education from a level 5 to level 8 on the National Framework of Qualifications. One adult has a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent and copies of the relevant certificate were available.

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

The following policy was reviewed and found to meet the necessary requirements:

- Policy on outdoor play.
- Policy on outings.

Non-Compliance Information

1. The policy on infection control did not set out hand and respiratory hygiene practices. Specific measures were not outlined in the policy to address infection control especially in relation to nappy changing and toileting procedures, prevention of cross contamination and safe food management.
2. The policy on accidents and incidents did not outline the measures to be taken to prevent accidents and incidents or the steps to be taken to contact the parents or guardians or emergency services if necessary.
3. The policy on administration of medication did not outline the procedure for safe labelling and storing of prescription medicines and the procedure for recording medication administration in routine or emergency situations.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The following statement was made by the registered provider:

Corrective and Preventive Action

1. The policy has been updated, and the service will ensure to update any changes necessary in the future.
2. The policy has been updated, and the service will ensure to update any changes necessary in the future.
3. The policy has been updated, and the service will ensure to update any changes necessary in the future.

Supporting documentation submitted

1. A copy of the updated policy was received in the office of the inspectorate.
2. A copy of the updated policy was received in the office of the inspectorate.
3. A copy of the updated policy was received in the office of the inspectorate.

Summary Comment

The action taken by the registered provider has addressed the non-compliances identified under Regulation 10.

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.

provide assistance to the person in charge in operating the service is, at all times, within close distance of the service and available to attend the service to assist the person in charge in the event of an emergency.

Compliance Information

- (1) There was an adequate number of adults responsible for the direct care and supervision of the children in attendance at all times during the inspection.
- (3) The service exceeded the minimum ratios required as per regulation. The ratio observed on the day of inspection was as follows, there were 2 adults directly caring for 10 children in attendance with the registered provider on site also.

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:

(j) details of any medication administered to a pre-school child attending the service with signed parental consent.

(k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.

Compliance Information

(j) The inspector requested to review medication administration records. The registered provider informed the inspector that no medication has been administered in the service. A medication administration record sheet was available to record medication administration if required.

(k) The inspector reviewed the accident and incident record book. No incidents had been recorded in the current school year, five incidents in total were reviewed and contained all the required information.

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:

- The children were observed to enjoy a mid-morning snack consisting of sandwiches, cheese, yogurts, crackers and fruit. This were provided by the parents and guardians and was in line with the services healthy eating policy.
- Children's drinking water was available in their individual bottles which were accessible throughout the morning.
- The children were observed accessing the toilet independently with staff available to provide assistance should it be required.
- Children were observed washing their hands before snack time and after using the sanitary facilities.
- A rest area was available in the book corner with low size couches and children were observed to use this area.
- Children were observed to dress appropriately outdoors wearing coats and hats.

Supporting relationships:

- The adults in the care room were noted to interact with the children in a caring manner throughout the inspection.
- The staff sat at circle time with the children and interacted in conversations using gentle tones. Staff were observed encouraging all children to participate in the discussions or the singing.
- Staff supported the children to find positive solutions when experiencing challenges such as observed when a child wanted to enter a pop-up house outdoors.
- Staff were observed intervening in minor issues in the outdoor area between children, encouraging them to take turns.
- Staff stayed beside the children during snack time and assisted children as needed with opening containers or wrappers when a child found it difficult to do so.
- The service used a parent handbook to provide information to the parents about the service. Parents or guardians were spoken to at drop off and collection, via technology applications or email.
- A key worker system was in place for each child for the school calendar year.
- Family pictures were evident in the care room which promoted a sense of family for the children.
- Children's independence was encouraged with children putting on their own coats.

Physical and material environment:

- The room was clean and well maintained. It was laid out in clearly defined areas including a home corner, dressing up area, book corner and an art and puzzles area.
- All the toys, equipment and materials were placed on shelves at the child's height making them easily accessible.
- Age and stage appropriate tables and chairs were available for the children to use.
- Children had direct access to the outdoor area which included a covered area to facilitate outdoor play in all weathers. There was a large variety of outdoor equipment including bikes, climbing frames and balls which supported the children's physical development. Areas and equipment which facilitated imaginary play included play kitchens and tunnels.

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 door was secured. This restricted unauthorised access to the building and prevented the risk of children exiting unsupervised.
- The windows in the care rooms were out of reach of the children.
- Cleaning agents were stored out of reach of the children.
- The toys and play equipment assessed were in good condition.
- The side outdoor area was safe and secure with high concrete walls and a gate. This prevented the children gaining unsupervised access to unsafe areas.
- The equipment assessed in the outdoor area was in good condition.

Infection control:

- Handwashing facilities were accessible to the children with warm running water, liquid soap and paper towels.
- The temperature of the warm water accessible to the children in the sanitary accommodations was recorded between 27°C and 28°C.
- Children were observed to wash their hand before snack time and after using the sanitary facilities.
- Lidded pedal bins were in use for the disposal of waste in the sanitary areas and care rooms.
- Children's coats and bags were stored off the ground.
- A refrigerator was available in the care room for the storage of perishable foods.

Administration of medication:

- Temperature reducing medicines were stored in the original box and out of reach of children. The medicine inspected was in date.

Fire safety:

- Fire exits were noted to be free from obstruction.
- All fire extinguishers observed were wall mounted.

Outing:

- The registered provider stated that the service attends one outing a year where the parents or guardians attend with their child and arrange their own transport. A risk assessment is completed yearly for this outing.

Non-Compliance Information

General safety:

1. The inspector noted that the front garden play area had a low wall accessible to the children with a high drop at the back. This created a possible fall risk to the children. It is acknowledged that the registered provider can close off the front play area from access to the children.

Infection control:

2. During an observed nappy changing procedure, the following practices posed a risk of contamination and cross infection.
 - An apron was not worn during the procedure.
 - The nappy changing area was not adequately cleaned between use.
 - The child's hands were not washed after nappy change.
 - Adequate handwashing procedures were not adhered to during the disposal of waste from the nappy changing area.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The following statement was made by the registered provider:

Corrective & Preventive Action

General safety:

1. The registered provider is awaiting a block layer to raise the wall. The children will have no access to this area until this is complete. Alternative play areas offsite are available for use and the registered provider will complete a risk assessment prior to using these areas. The register provider will monitor the front area in case any further changes are needed.

Infection control:

2. The infection control policy has been updated. The service is awaiting a plumber to insert a sink into the nappy changing area. The staff and children are currently washing their hands at an alternative sink and using cleaning sprays and hand gel where necessary. A new pedal operated bin will be purchased.

Supporting documentation submitted

General safety:

1. The written word of the registered provider was accepted in the office of the inspectorate.

Infection control:

2. The infection control policy and photographic evidence was received in the office of the inspectorate.

Summary Comment

The corrective action submitted by the registered provider have addressed the non-compliances identified under Regulation 23. This will be reviewed in 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.*
- (2) The record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection by-*
- (c) an authorised person.*

Compliance Information

- (1)
- (a) The inspector was provided with a list of monthly fire drills which were recorded in writing. The most recent fire drill undertaken was dated 24 March 2025.
 - (b) The certification for servicing the firefighting equipment and the smoke alarms was dated 19 August 2024.
- (2)
- (c) All records were furnished to the inspector on request.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The insurance certificate indicated that sufficient cover was in place for the sessional service and the policy was valid until 27 March 2026.