

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015DL071
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Name of Service:	Little Rascals Community Playgroup CLG
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Address of Service:	Resource Centre, Rossnakill, Fanad, Co. Donegal
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Eircode:	F92 K461
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Name of Registered Provider:	Tracey McBride
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	04/11/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	5	PM	-
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Hampton Court, Cootehill Road, Drumalee, Co Cavan. H12 YY84
Inspection undertaken by:	S Mc Kenna
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	Not Applicable
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Description of service

Little Rascals Community Playgroup is a non-profit early years service situated in the townland of Rosnakill on Donegal's Fanad peninsula. It has been in operation since 2001. A sessional service is provided for a maximum of twenty-two children aged 2 to 6 years. The service is registered to provide a morning session weekdays from 9.15am to 12.15pm for 38 weeks per year. The service operates within a purpose-built resource centre. Facilities include one indoor playroom with adjoining sanitary accommodation and a small dedicated outdoor play area. Children also have access to an indoor sports hall on dedicated days of the week .

Staffing

There is a total of 3 staff employed to work directly with children. The registered provider does not work in the service. A student on a transition year work experience attends the service on Tuesdays from September until December.

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.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under Regulation 9 Management & Recruitment, Regulation 11 Staffing Levels, Regulation 19 Health, Welfare & Development of Child, Regulation 23 Safeguarding Health, Safety and Welfare of Child, Regulation 25 First Aid, Regulation 26 Fire Safety Measures and Regulation 27 Supervision.

However, on inspection, an additional non-compliance which posed a risk was identified under Regulation 8 Notification of change in circumstances and Regulation 16 Record in relation to pre-school service. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

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 person in charge, deputy person in charge, work experience student and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

Part II - Registration and Register

Regulation 8 - Notification of change in circumstances

(1) A registered provider of a pre-school service other than a temporary pre-school service shall, subject to paragraph (3), notify the Agency in writing of any proposed change in the details in relation to the pre-school service contained in the register pursuant to section 58C(2) of the Act or Regulation 7(2) at least 60 days before it is proposed that the change would take effect.

Non-Compliance Information

(1) The registered provider did not notify Tusla of the change in operating hours. The service is registered with Tusla to operate a sessional service between the hours of 9.15am to 12.15pm. Attendance records reviewed on the day and also confirmed by the person in charge, demonstrated that the session operates from 9.30am to 12.30pm. It is acknowledged a change in circumstances application was submitted to Tusla on the afternoon following the inspection.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

Filled out and submitted a change in circumstances form with Tusla with the updated opening hours. Any future changes within the setting will be sent to Tusla.

Supporting documentation submitted

Copy of email confirming change in hours accepted by Tusla.

Summary Comment

The response from the registered provider and supporting documentation submitted has adequately addressed the non-compliance in Regulation 8 (1).

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 service had a designated person in charge, and a named person to deputise in their absence.

(b) Following discussion with the person in charge, and review of staff attendance records, it was confirmed that when the preschool service was in operation, the designated person in charge or the named person in charge were on the premises.

(2) The files for 3 staff and 1 student were reviewed.

(a) (b) A total of 7 references was available on file of which 5 were validated.

Of the references that were available 4 references were from a previous employer and 3 references were from a reputable source.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for the three employed staff. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every

three years for the 3 employed staff. The secondary school where the student attends carried out the vetting procedures for their student, and a vetting record was available on file.

(d) A review of the employment history for the 3 staff, demonstrated that one adult had lived outside the State for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months. The required police vetting for the one staff was available on file.

(4) Documentary evidence was available to confirm that the 3 staff employed to work with children held an appropriate childcare qualification at Level 5 or above on the National Framework of Qualifications. A qualification for the student on work experience is not required.

Non-Compliance Information

(2) (a) (b)

The registered provider did not ensure that all vetting procedures had been carried out to ensure that all adults working in the service are suitable.

- A second written, validated reference was not available for the student.
- The two written references on file for one staff member were not validated.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

A second reference was received and validated for the student.

Two written references were Validated for the staff member.

Ensure that all staff, students and volunteers have the correct and relevant documents before starting in the setting. A checklist is now situated in the back of the policy folder.

Supporting documentation submitted

Copy of validated references. A copy of the new checklist.

Summary Comment

The response from the registered provider and supporting documentation submitted has adequately addressed the non-compliances in Regulation 9 (2) (a) (b).

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 was an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the pre-school service.
- (3) The adult to child ratios were correct in the service when the inspector arrived unannounced and remained so throughout the inspection. Two adults cared for 5 children aged 2 years 11 months to 4 years 7 months.

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:*
- (a) the name, position, qualifications and experience of the person in charge and of every other employee, unpaid worker and contractor;*

Non-Compliance Information

- (1) (a)
- There was no recruitment file available for the student, therefore it could not be determined if police vetting was required.
- Photographic identification was not on file for the student.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

Garda vetting, photographic ID and CV were obtained for the student.

Ensure that all staff, students and volunteers have the correct and relevant documents before starting in the setting. A checklist is now situated in the back of the policy folder.

Supporting documentation submitted

Copy of recruitment file and photo id submitted.

Police vetting was not required as per recruitment file submitted.

Summary Comment

The response from the registered provider and supporting documentation submitted has adequately addressed the non-compliance in Regulation 16 (1) (a).

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

The following examples demonstrate how children's learning, development and well-being was facilitated in the service:

Basic Needs

The children had access to drinking water during their preschool session. Lunch time was an opportunity where staff and children sat together, engaging in conversations in a relaxed, unhurried manner.

The children were encouraged to use the toilet independently; however, staff were also aware of each child's needs and were available for support where required.

The children experience a change of environment on a daily basis and alternate between outdoor play and the use of the large indoor hall. On the day of inspection, the children were allocated time to play in the indoor hall after their lunch, and up until home time. The children displayed signs of excitement when they knew this was planned for that day. The children told the inspector what they liked to play in the large hall such as running and playing on ride-on trucks.

A rest area was provided in the preschool room to include a soft mat and soft cushions where children could take time out and rest during their preschool session.

Supporting Relationships

The atmosphere upon the inspector's arrival was warm and inviting. The children were engaged in free play of their choice, which included playing with blocks, playing in the home corner and pushing prams, and then transitioned to sensory play activities such as painting, sand play and playdough.

The staff were observed to treat each child with respect and address each child by name. Discussions about the child's home life demonstrated familiarity among the staff and children about their personal lives.

The staff were observed to use gentle encouragement for children to be mindful of other children's feelings, such as when minor disagreements over the sharing of toys occurred. The staff encouraged and promoted positive interactions. The staff and student were observed to communicate using soft, gentle tones while interacting with the children. The staff and student were observed to sit closely with the children and engaged in floor play activities such as building tracks for the cars and trucks.

Communication with families is through a digital application where observations and photos of the child are shared with the child's parents approximately every two weeks.

Physical And Material Environment

The indoor environment was comfortable, spacious and laid out to suit the needs of the children attending the service. Many designated interest areas were provided to include: a construction area, shop area, home corner and dress up, rest area with books, sand tray, playdough table, wall-mounted chalkboard, painting easel, sand tray, tabletop areas, floor play toys and small world toys and equipment.

The play equipment and materials were easily accessible to the children on low-level shelves or boxes. Additional resources were stored on higher-level shelving accessible by the staff.

The walls in the preschool room had many displays and included family photos, a birthday chart, nursery rhymes, "our pumpkin patch" art display, and a child's picture display.

A small outdoor area located outside the preschool entrance had a ground surface of gravel, a construction area with digging toys, a mud kitchen, a wheelbarrow and a floor-level sand pit available in this area. The large indoor hall provided an area for gross motor play with ride-on toys, see-saws, hoops, cones and balls were among the equipment available for use in the hall.

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 premises were appropriately secured to prevent a child from exiting unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the premises.

- The garden area is secured by wooden fencing and a gate. There were no hazards identified.
- The resources and play equipment in use by the children were observed in good repair.
- Risk assessments were completed, and records demonstrated that they were carried out each morning upon staff's arrival at the service.
- Storage areas were inaccessible to the preschool children.
- Cleaning agents were stored out of the reach of children.
- Fire exits remained free from obstruction during the inspection.

Infection Control:

- Warm thermostatically controlled running water, liquid soap, paper towels and foot-operated bins were provided for handwashing procedures. Hand washing was observed in practice after children used the toilet and before lunchtime.
- Sanitary areas were ventilated through means of trickle vents and openable windows.
- Tables were observed to be cleaned before lunchtime. The children's snacks were stored in the service fridge.
- Cleaning schedules were maintained, and the service was presented in a clean and hygienic manner throughout.
- External waste bins were stored in an area not accessible to the children.

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 ensured that a person who held in-date First Aid Response (FAR) training was at all times immediately available to the children attending the pre-school service. Three staff members who were rostered to work daily in the service held in-date FAR training certificates.

(2) (a) & (b) A suitably equipped first aid box was available on the premises and was stored in an accessible and conspicuous location out of the reach of children.

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 the fire drills that take place was available. The most recent fire drill was recorded in October 2025.

(b) The annual maintenance certificate for the fire extinguishers was dated June 2025, and the smoke alarms were dated September 2025.

(4) The fire evacuation procedures were displayed on walls throughout the preschool, which contained details in relation to the procedure to be followed in the event of a fire.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 27 – Supervision

A registered provider shall ensure that pre-school children attending the service are supervised at all times.

Compliance Information

On the day of the inspection, the inspector observed the staff members appropriately supervising the children in attendance.