

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015LH058		
Name of Service:	Little Rascals		
Address of Service:	Main Rd, Tullyallen, Drogheda, Co. Louth		
Eircode:	A92 K4VC		
Name of Registered Provider:	Marie Russell		
Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional		
Date of Inspection:	11/07/2023		
No of pre-school children:	AM	34	PM 33
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	180-189 Lakeshore Drive, Airside Business Park, Swords, Co Dublin K67 Y5C6		
Inspection undertaken by:	AM Coyle, S Taaffe & S Cully		
Title:	Early Years Inspectors		
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		

Description of service

Little Rascals is one of two early years services operated by the registered provider in Co Louth and Co Meath. Little Rascals is registered to provide full day, part time and sessional pre-school care and education to children from 0 to 6 years. School aged care is provided to children up to the age of 12 years. The service is located a purpose built 2 storey building in the village of Tullyallen, Co Louth and is registered to operate from 07:30 am to 6:30 pm Monday to Friday. There are 5 care rooms in the service namely the Baby room, Toddler room and the Preschool room 1 all of which are located on the ground floor of the service, Preschool room 2 and the Afterschool room are located on the first floor of the service.

Staffing

The registered provider employs a total of 23 staff members in this service. Within this staffing compliment the area manager is responsible for the overall operational management of both this service and the registered provider's second early years' service. In the absence of the registered provider and the area manager, both of whom provide support in caring for the children when required, a named supervisor who works full-time in this service assumes the role of person in charge. Of the 23 staff members employed, 16 staff members work directly with pre-school children and 1 staff member works solely with school aged children. Seven of these staff members are employed on term-time contracts and 1 staff member is on extended statutory leave. Ancillary staff employed in the service include a chef, 2 staff members who are employed as housekeepers, 1 administrator who works in this service on a daily basis and 1 staff member who manages accounts and is occasionally present on site.

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.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under Regulation 15 – Record of pre-school child and Regulation 16 – Record in relation to pre-school service.

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 inspectors wish 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

(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 area manager was the designated person in charge of the service and there was a named person available to deputise as required.

(b) The service supervisor was in charge of the service when the inspectors arrived unannounced at 9.30am on the morning of the inspection. The area manager arrived in the service within 5 minutes and remained on the premises for the duration of the inspection. The registered provider was present in the service for a period of time during the inspection and also for the closing meeting at the end of the inspection.

(2)(a)(b) Two written, validated references were available for the registered provider and for the 23 staff members employed in the service.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures were available for the registered provider and for the 23 staff members.

(d) International police vetting was available for the 3 staff members who had resided outside of the Irish jurisdiction for more than 6 consecutive months as adults.

(4) The registered provider held a major award in early childhood studies at Level 9 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) and all 16 staff members who work directly with pre-school children in the service held appropriate childcare qualifications at Level 5 – 8 on the NFQ or a qualification deemed by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) to be equivalent.

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.

(8) Without prejudice to paragraphs (2) to (7)-

(a) a registered provider of a pre-school service other than a child-minding service or a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that there are at least 2 adults on the premises at all times,

Compliance Information

(1) During the period of inspection there was an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the pre-school children.

(2) On the day of inspection, the following adult to child ratios were observed when the service was operating at capacity:

In the Baby room there were 8 children aged 1 year to 1 year 9 months being cared for by 2 adults.

In the Toddler room there were 8 children aged 1 years 9 months to 2 years 4 months being cared for by 2 adults.

In the Preschool room 1 there were 13 children aged 3½ years to 5 years being cared for by 2 adults.

In the Preschool room 2 there were 5 Preschool children aged 4 years 6 months to 5 years 4 months and 3 school aged children being cared for by 1 adult.

(8) (a) The registered provider ensured that 2 adults were present in the service at all times. This was confirmed by both the staff roster and staff sign in records.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 15 – Record of pre-school child

(1) A registered provider of a pre-school service other than a pre-school service in a drop-in centre or a temporary pre-school service shall ensure that a record in writing is kept in respect of each pre-school child attending the service containing the following particulars:

(a) the name and date of birth of the child;

(b) the date on which the child first attended the service;

(c) the date on which the child ceased to attend the service;

(d) the name and address of a parent or guardian of the child and a telephone number where that parent or guardian or a relative or friend of the child can be contacted during the hours of operation of the service;

(e) authorisation for the collection of the child;

(f) details of any illness, disability, allergy, or special need of the child, together with all the information relevant to the provision of special care or attention.

(g) the name and telephone number of the child's registered medical practitioner;

(h) record of immunisations, if any, received by the child;

(i) written parental consent for appropriate medical treatment of the child in the event of an emergency.

(3) A record in writing referred to in paragraph (1) or (2) shall be open to inspection on the premises by-

(c) an authorised person.

Compliance Information

(1) A sampling process was used in relation to the children's records. All 16 sampled registration forms were appropriately completed with the required information as specified in sub-sections (a) to (i) in this regulation.

(3)(c) The children's records were open to inspection as requested by the inspectors.

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;*
- (b) details of the class of service and the age profile of children for which the service is registered to provide services;*
- (c) details of the adult:child ratios in the service;*
- (d) the type of care or programme provided in the service;*
- (e) the facilities available;*
- (f) the opening hours and fees;*
- (g) the policies, procedures and statements the service is required to maintain in accordance with Regulation 10;*
- (h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis;*
- (i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;*
- (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.*

(3) A record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection on the premises, and the documents and records referred to in paragraph (2)(a) shall be open to inspection whether on the premises or elsewhere, by an authorised person.

Compliance Information

(1)(a) Photographs of each staff member were on display in the entrance hallway, accompanied by their name, position and qualifications. Further details including each staff member's experience and training records were maintained within the staff files on the premises and these were presented for review by the inspectors.

(b) - (f) The information specified in sub-sections (b) to (f) in this regulation were on display on a notice board in the entrance hallway.

(g) A record in writing was maintained of policies and procedures required in accordance with Regulation 10. These were provided both in hard copy and in electronic format on the premises. Relevant policies were emailed to parents in conjunction with the service's welcome pack.

(h) Details of children's daily attendance including arrival and departure times were recorded in roll books within each care room.

(i) An up-to-date weekly staff roster was available, and staff sign in records were maintained on a daily basis. The records included each staff members' arrival, departure and break times.

(k) The service had a record in writing of accidents, injuries and incidents involving pre-school children. Twenty of these records were sampled and found to be clear and legible, and included parental signatures to document that they had been informed and were aware of the relevant incidents on the day of occurrence.

(3) The records referred to in paragraph (1) were open to inspection as requested by the inspectors as authorised persons.

Non-Compliance Information

(1)(j) Not all medication administration forms maintained in the service were complete as evidenced in the following examples:

- Some forms did not include signed parental consent to authorise staff members administer medication to their child in the service. Examples of this practice included forms maintained in relation to medication administered to children in the service on 15/05/2023, 22/05/2023, 23/5/2023, 12/06/2023 and 13/06/2023. A medication form relating to 1 child showed that a medication was administered on 6 occasions on dates between 21/6/2023 and 6/7/2023 without signed parental consent.

- Some forms did not include a second staff member's signature to show that the medication had been appropriately checked and the procedure undertaken by 2 staff members. Examples of this practice included forms maintained in relation to medication administered in the service on 28/04/2023, 20/3.2023, 13/06/2023 and 16/6/2023.
- Some forms were not signed on collection by the child's guardian to document that they had been informed and were aware of what medication was given to their child during the course of the day and at what time. Examples of this practice included forms maintained in relation to medication administered in the service on 12/06/2023, 13/06/2023, 13/6/2023 (different child) and 16/6/2023. A medication form relating to 1 child showed that medication was administered on 6 occasions on dates between 21/6/2023 and 06/7/2023 without a signature from a guardian to document they had been informed of the administration.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective Action

Registered Provider has reviewed their Administration of Medication policy and issued to all staff via email. All parents now complete the medicine consent forms and sign same. Manager has spoken with all staff in care rooms to ensure they understand fully the procedure to be followed.

Preventive Action

A sample form outlining how each form should be correctly completed and the responsibilities of same is available on the staff notice board. This subject will be discussed at a whole team staff meeting when our sessional staff return to ensure all staff are aware. We have issued each family a pdf version of our medical consent form to have readily available to complete prior to arriving at the service if needed. Medical consent forms will be spot checked by the manager to ensure compliance.

Supporting documentation submitted

Administration of medication policy.

Summary Comment

The evidence submitted by the registered provider in relation to regulation 16 – Record in relation to pre-school service has been reviewed and accepted.

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

(1)(a) The following observations are examples of how each child's learning, development and well-being was facilitated within the daily life of the service:

Basic needs:

- There was a healthy eating policy in place in the service and healthy meals and snacks were provided for the children by the onsite chef at regular intervals throughout the day. Mealtimes were observed to be a pleasant unhurried experience with children given plenty of time to enjoy their meals. Staff members were observed sitting with the children engaging them in conversation whilst encouraging them to eat. The staff members in the Baby room sat in front of the children who required assistance with eating warmly engaging with the children at their eye level. Throughout the care rooms the children's water bottles were accessible to them on low level shelving for them to take if thirsty at any time.
- The children's nappies were changed at scheduled times and more frequently as required. The staff members used the opportunity to engage warmly with the children chatting to them and singing songs. The children who were toilet trained were encouraged to use the toilet independently and gently reminded to wash their hands afterwards.
- The younger children in the Baby room were facilitated to sleep in line with their home routine and were placed to sleep when they exhibited signs of tiredness and if their sleep time coincided with mealtimes they were provided with their meals when they woke up. The majority of children attending the Baby room slept after they had their dinner in the sleep room adjacent to the Baby room or in cots set up in the care room and three children under the age of 2 slept in foldable cots in the care room after dinner and the children attending the Toddler room over the age of 2 years slept on sleep mats on the floor of the care room after they had their dinner.

- Throughout the care rooms the children exhibited familiarity with navigating their environments and they were observed moving between the interest areas selecting play materials. In the Baby room there was ample space for children to roll, crawl, pull themselves up and begin the early stages of walking in a safe space.
- The outdoor area was directly accessible from the care rooms on the ground floor. All of the children attending the service enjoyed extended periods in the outdoor area to the rear of the service on the day of inspection.

Supporting relationships around children:

- Throughout the service staff were observed interacting with children in a warm, caring and sensitive manner. Staff working in the Baby room spoke in soft gentle tones and provided reassurance and encouragement when children appeared unsure or upset. Staff positioned themselves close to children to provide a sense of security whilst giving the freedom to explore and investigate. This practice supports children to feel safe and secure. Staff working with the older children supported children to interact positively with each other and modelled good social behaviours when interacting with each other.
- In the Baby room a daily record of the children's feeding, nappy changes, activities, general wellbeing and sleep was maintained for the children and shared with the parents when the children are collected from the service.
- There was a consistency of staff provision in the service, and this was evidenced as the staff members were very familiar with the children and were observed engaging the children in conversation regarding events at home and their families.
- Within the care rooms smaller groups of children are assigned to specific staff members who take responsibility for documenting the children's learning progress.

Physical and material environment:

- Throughout the care rooms play resources and equipment were available on low level shelves for the children to take play equipment and materials as they chose which encouraged independence and facilitated the children's choice.
- The Baby room was spacious and provided space for the children to crawl, explore and move around with stable props available to support children with walking. A large shatter proof wall mounted mirror supported the children in developing their visual senses. A well-resourced home area was available to support the children's imaginary play in addition to transport toys, musical instruments and a baby gym with climbing and sliding wedges to support the children's motor development.

- Throughout the care rooms a broad range of books were available to support the children’s language development.
- An enclosed outdoor area was provided to the rear of the service and was directly accessible from the care rooms on the ground floor of the service with each care room having a separate space to play in. The space used by the children attending Preschool room 1 was shared by the children attending Preschool room 2 and the afterschool room. The areas directly accessible from the Toddler room and the Preschool room 1 were surfaced with tarmacadam and the area used by the children attending the baby room was surfaced with safety tiles. The areas were well resourced and included mud kitchens with additional play resources for the children to extend their play, sand and water trays, ride on toys, climbing frames with slides along with space for the children to enjoy free movement. In all 3 areas covered areas with rigid plastic roofing were provided to enable the children to remain outside during light rain showers.

Non-Compliance Information

19(1)(a)

1. The family wall in the Toddler room was displayed above adult eye-level rather than the children’s eye level. When family photos are displayed out of children’s sight and reach, it prevents them from reaping the benefits of a family wall where they can seek comfort by seeing familiar faces from home, gain a sense of identity and belonging, see representation of other families and overall impacting on their well-being in a positive way.
2. There was no suitable area for rest or relaxation for the preschool children attending the Preschool 2 room. During the summer period, this room is used for children attending full day care and so suitable facilities for rest should be available.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective Action

1. The Family Wall display has been lowered to meet the needs of the child.
2. The rest area in Preschool 2 is being developed and new resources are being sourced for when it reopens for Preschool in September. This room is currently closed until the start of the Preschool year.

Preventive Action

1.&2. The room leaders will ensure these areas are maintained and meet the needs of the children. Spot checks will be carried out by Management and new resources sourced if required.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photograph of the rest area in Preschool room 2.

Summary Comment

The evidence submitted by the registered provider in relation to regulation 19 - Health, welfare and development of child has been reviewed and accepted.

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 doors leading into the premises were appropriately secured to prevent the children from exiting unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the premises.
- The kitchen was located on the ground floor and was inaccessible to the children.
- The service's designated emergency exits were unobstructed.
- Cleaning agents were stored safely out of the reach of children.

Infection Control:

- Thermostatically controlled warm water, liquid soap and paper towels were available at all the sinks throughout the service. The children were facilitated to wash their hands before eating, after using the toilet, after nappy changing and following messy play and outdoor play.
- In the Baby room soothers were labelled and stored in personalised containers when not in use. A labelled containers were provided in the Baby room for the segregation of mouthed toys after use. Staff members clearly described appropriate procedures for the management of mouthed toys and soothers.
- The premises, play equipment and materials were in a clean and hygienic condition.
- Up to date documented cleaning schedules were on display in the service.

Administration of Medication:

- Medications were stored out of the reach of children.

Safe Sleep:

- All children aged less than 2 years had access to a standard cot to sleep in.
- Ten-minute sleep check observations were performed and documented on all sleeping children, noting each child's colour, position and breathing pattern at the time of each check.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. A cleaning agent was left within reach of children in the Preschool Room 1.

Infection Control:

2. The veneer surface was torn away from a corner of a small square table in the Preschool room 1. This prevents the table from being cleaned effectively.

Administration of Medication:

3. Practice regarding administration of medications was in variance to the services' policy, with medication being administered to children prior to completion of the administration of medication consent form by a parent or guardian. A staff member who works with the children confirmed that parents inform staff of the need for children to have medication administered when children are dropped off at the service, this is recorded in a communication book, and the staff member completes the administration consent form to be signed later by a parent. The policy states that parents/guardians must fill in the consent form to authorize administration and that staff cannot administer medication without written and signed permission. This practice increases the risk of incorrect administration of medication and is in variance with good practice outlined in the existing policy.
4. Practice regarding the management of children with on-going medical conditions was in variance to the services policy, as observed in the case of 2 children, 1 of which requires an emergency care plan and 1 who requires a medical care plan. The documentation in place for the child requiring an emergency care plan did not reflect the procedure outlined in the policy, nor was it displayed in an accessible way. In discussion with a staff member who works with the child, they were not familiar with the details of the existing emergency care plan. There was no medical care plan for a child who requires administration of oral medication on an on-going basis. The services' policy states that medical care plans are required for this circumstance, including instructions on when and how this oral medication is administered and is completed with parents/guardians prior to administration.

Safe Sleep:

5. Fleece blankets were in use for the children in the Baby room. Fleece blankets are not recommended for use in children aged less than 2 years due to the risk of children overheating.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective Action

General Safety:

1. The Manager has spoken with staff in all rooms about the importance of storing cleaning agents out of the reach of children. Presses at high level are provided for this purpose.

Infection Control:

2. The table has been removed.

Administration of Medication:

3. Manager has reviewed their Administration of Medication policy and issued to all staff via email. All parents now complete the medicine consent forms and sign same. Manager has spoken with all staff in care rooms to ensure they understand fully the procedure to be followed.
4. Hospital Emergency Care Plans Medical Care plans are now displayed prominently in the care room readily available to all staff. Staff are introduced to each child's Care Plan as they arise.

Safe Sleep:

5. Fleece Blankets for Under 2's have been replaced with cellular blankets

Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. Spot checks are in place by management.

Infection Control:

2. The daily safety check procedure has been refreshed with staff to ensure they are fully aware of what is not acceptable as wear and tear.

Administration of Medication:

3. A sample form outlining how each form should be correctly completed and the responsibilities of same is available on the staff notice board. This subject will be discussed at a whole team staff meeting when their sessional staff return to ensure all staff are aware. Manager has issued each family a pdf version of their medical consent form to have readily available to complete prior to arriving at the service if needed. Medical consent forms will be spot checked by the manager to ensure compliance.

- The parents of children who require an Emergency or Medical Care Plan will be consulted with prior to commencing or in the case of an attending child this process will take place immediately staff is notified of them requiring such a plan. All staff working with the children will be informed of the needs of each child by management.

Safe Sleep:

- All blankets will be replaced with cellular blankets to avoid confusion.

Summary Comment

The evidence submitted by the registered provider in relation to regulation 23 - Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child has been reviewed and accepted.

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

(2)(a) The first aid boxes available in the service were suitably equipped and stored in conspicuous locations on the premises.

(b) The first aid boxes were available in the event of an emergency to the children attending the pre-school service at all times.

Non-Compliance Information

(1) On the day of inspection, the staff roster indicated that there was no person trained in First Aid Response (FAR) on the premises between the times of 7.30am – 8.45am on 10/07/2023, 11/07/2023, 12/07/2023 and 13/07/2023 and from 7.30am – 8.00am on 14/07/2023.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective Action

- (1) A staff member with FAR is now rostered on for the length of the day.

Preventive Action

- (1) Additional staff are identified to train in FAR and manager is currently sourcing training for same.

Summary Comment

The evidence submitted by the registered provider in relation to regulation 25 - First aid has been reviewed and accepted.