

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015LK180
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Name of Service:	Rainbow Childcare Academy Ltd
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Address of Service:	Unit 22 Block A, River Point, Bishops Quay, Limerick, Co. Limerick
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Eircode:	V94 ND89
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Name of Registered Provider:	Nichola McEwan
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Service type:	Full Day
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Date of Inspection:	10/04/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	54	PM	46
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Tusla Early Years Inspectorate Office, 2 nd Floor Estuary House, Henry Street Limerick.
Inspection undertaken by:	M Riordan
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

Rainbow Childcare Academy is a full day care pre-school service located in an apartment complex in the center of Limerick city. It offers a service to children from 1 year to 6 years of age. A service for school aged children is offered each afternoon. The service operates from 7.30am to 6.00pm, Monday to Friday.

The service is located across two adjacent apartment blocks, with the younger children accommodated in Block A and the older children accommodated in Block B.

In Block A there is a Wobbler and Toddler Room, three Sleep rooms, a kitchen, a staff room and a manager's office. In Block B there are three Pre-school rooms that accommodate the children over 3 years of age. Two separate outdoor play spaces are accessible for all age groups each day.

Staffing

The registered provider is the designated person in charge of operating the service. An assistant manager is also employed at the facility. There are an additional 14 staff working at the pre-school. Relief staff are available to cover staff holidays and absenteeism when required. All staff hold the required qualifications in Early Childhood Care and Education, or a course deemed to be the equivalent of same.

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. The following regulation was accessed regulation

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 registered provider, 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 registered provider was present on the day of the inspection. There was a person available who was able to deputise if required.

(b) During the period of the inspection, the registered provider was present, and the staff roster indicated that a person in charge was rostered on duty each day at the service.

(2) All staff files were reviewed.

(a) Two written and validated references were available for all staff employed to work at the service.

(b) Where past employer references were not available, there were references from reputable sources available.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures received from the National Vetting Bureau of An Garda Síochána were available for all staff members employed at the service. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) Police vetting was available for the 10 staff members who had lived outside the Irish jurisdiction, for a period of longer than six consecutive months.

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

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) The registered provider of the service ensured that an adequate number of adults were working directly with the children. Extra staff were also available to help at busy times during the day.

(2) On the day of the inspection there were 54 pre-school children present with 13 staff members in the morning. In the afternoon there were 46 pre-school children present with 11 staff members. The adult/child ratio was correct both in the morning and in the afternoon.

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) BASIC NEEDS:

A healthy eating policy was implemented, serving nutritious meals and snacks throughout the day. Menus were shared with parents, and alternative dishes were available. Meals were social occasions with extra portions offered for hungry children. Younger children were fed in highchairs and older children dined at low level tables and chairs. On the day of the inspection a sweet potato casserole was served for the main meal. Snacks offered included brioche rolls, cheese, fruits, raisins, and yogurts, with drinks always accessible.

Sanitary facilities were near each room, with nappy changing areas in Block A and B. Children's toiletries were labelled and safely stored. Aprons and gloves were provided. Each room had tissues, wipes, and lidded bins for safe waste disposal. Aprons were used for messy play, and spare clothes were available if needed.

Block A had three sleep rooms with four cots and low-level beds, all in good condition. Children were supervised during sleep, and staff stayed with those transitioning from cots to beds. Two well-resourced outdoor play areas were available for outdoor play.

PHYSICAL AND MATERIAL ENVIRONMENT:

The facility was divided into two separate apartment blocks, Block A and Block B.

Block A housed the Wobblers and Toddlers. The Wobblers room featured numerous floor-based activities with soft rubber matting covering the entire floor space. A large, soft chair was provided to facilitate staff holding and sitting with younger children. A wall-mounted blackboard and large chinks were accessible to encourage mark-making opportunities. Numerous sensory play equipment and sound-making toys were available in boxes on the floor and on low-level open shelves. A climbing frame in the centre of the room offered opportunities for children to develop walking, climbing, and balancing skills. Soft lighting was used in the room to create a relaxing atmosphere for the children while playing.

In the Toddler room, the space was divided into well-resourced interest areas. A rest area with soft seating, soft floor mats, and a well-stocked low-level book stand provided a relaxation and reading space. Labelled plastic boxes on a low-level stand contained various accessible toys and materials for tabletop activities. Imaginative play

areas with kitchen spaces, home corners, and dress-up clothes were also available. Toys and equipment were rotated, and both internal and external spaces were redesigned according to each child's preferences, interests, and abilities.

Children over 3 years of age were accommodated in Block B, which comprised three separate rooms. Each room provided numerous opportunities for various play experiences, including home corners, rest areas, chalkboards, tabletop activities, and library areas. Educational posters and children's paintings were displayed on the walls in each room.

Outdoor activities were encouraged as frequently as possible. Bikes, trikes, scooters, and low-level climbing frames were available to help develop children's gross motor abilities. Outdoor sand trays provided sensory play opportunities. Mud kitchens facilitated imaginative play experiences. Low-level seating outdoors allowed children to dine outside during favourable weather.

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:

All external doors were secured to prevent unsupervised exits. Emergency exits and fire doors were unobstructed. Highchairs had safety harnesses and were in good condition. Toys and equipment were safe, well-maintained, and free from hazards. Waste was stored in foot pedal operated lidded bins. Medicines were kept in original containers and were clearly labelled.

Safe Sleep:

Pre-school children were monitored during sleep. Room temperatures and blackout blinds were used to create a suitable sleeping environment. Staff followed guidelines to prevent sudden infant death syndrome.

Non-Compliance Information

Infection Control:

1. Staff did not follow nappy changing procedures as outlined in the Nappy changing policy. Staff were observed using the same gloves for three children and only washing their hands afterwards. Children's hands were also not washed, increasing the risk of cross-infection.

2.No hot water was available at the handwashing sink near Preschool Room 2 due to a broken boiler, which raised the risk of cross-infection.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

Infection Control:

1. All staff were retrained on the implementation of the nappy changing policy and staff are supervised on an ongoing basis to ensure all infection control procedures are following as outlined in the service policies.
2. The boiler which was broken on the day of the inspection was repaired ensuring at all times hot water is accessible at all wash hand basins.

Supporting documentation submitted

Details of the changes implemented were outlined in the corrective and preventative action plan submitted to the Office of the Early Years Inspectorate.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified has been adequately addressed.

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 firefighting 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 all fire drills were available at the service. Monthly fire drills took place. The date of the most recent fire drill was the 27 March 2025.

(b) Fire extinguishers and smoke alarms were serviced on an annual basis. The last service took place in October 2024.

(4) A notice for the procedures to be followed in the event of an outbreak of fire on the premises was clearly displayed in the front hallway of the service.

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) Entrance to the building was controlled by a buzzer at the front gate. All outdoor play areas were surrounded by steel fencing, ensuring children could not gain any unsupervised exit from the area.
- (c) All areas were well lit by natural light and by artificial light when needed. There was no evidence of mould, mildew, stuffiness or condensation on the premises. There were openable windows in occupied rooms, and these were opened throughout the day to ensure the circulation of fresh air in all areas.
- (d) The premises was clean and well maintained throughout. There were no broken toys or equipment noted in the premises.
- (e) There were an adequate number of toilets, nappy changing areas and wash hand basins in the facility.

Non-Compliance Information

- (d) The rubber floor tiles in the Toddler room had expanded and lifted, creating a trip hazard and making it difficult to keep the area clean. All flooring must be maintained in good condition and be easily cleanable.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

- (d) Alternative flooring was sourced for the Toddler room, ensuring the area was safe, free of hazards and was easily cleanable.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographs of the new flooring were forwarded to the Office of the Early Years Inspectorate.

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Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified has been adequately addressed.