

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015MN036
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Name of Service:	Little Rascals
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Address of Service:	Ballymacforban, Monaghan, Co. Monaghan
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Eircode:	H18 FH63
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Name of Registered Provider:	Caroline Toal
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	11/02/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	33	PM	25
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	No.18 The Grange Plantation Rd Monaghan
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Inspection undertaken by:	S. Skinnader and M. Flood
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Title:	Early Years Inspectors
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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 is a privately owned service which is in operation since 2000. It provides a full daycare, part time sessional service to children aged 0 – 6 years. The service caters for a maximum of 35 children. This service is situated on the outskirts of Monaghan town. It operates from a converted single story domestic dwelling house. There are 3 care rooms, sanitary accommodations, 2 sleep rooms and a kitchen. There is a large outdoor area to the rear of the building.

Staffing

There are 8 staff including the registered provider employed in the service. Seven of whom work directly with the children and 1 employed as the cook and in an administrative role.

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.

Sampling was carried out in relation to Regulation 15 and 16.

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.

Additional Information

A referral was made to the Environmental Health Officer in relation to food records.

Acknowledgments

The inspectors wish 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) & (b) The service had a designated person in charge who is also the registered provider and a named person to deputise as required. The person in charge was on the premises when the inspectors arrived unannounced to the service.

Of the 8 staff employed in the service three new staff files and Garda vetting for all other staff members were reviewed on the day of inspection. The full staff files for the other 5 members of staff were reviewed on the previous inspection and were found to be compliant.

(2)(a)(b) Of the 3 new staff files reviewed:

- There were 2 written and validated references from a past employer or an alternative source available for 2 members of staff.
- One staff member had 2 written references.

(c) Documentary evidence of a processed Garda vetting disclosure was available for all 3 new staff members. Garda vetting disclosures were also reviewed for the 5 other staff members including the registered provider. The Garda vetting disclosures were found to be within the re-vetting 3 yearly timeframes.

(4) Documentary evidence was available to show that 7 staff members working directly with the preschool children had a minimum Level 5 qualification.

Non-Compliance Information

(2)(a) The references for one staff member were not validated. This is a recurrent non-compliance and is at variance to the registered provider's assurances that "all staff validation forms" would be accessible in staff files.

(d) Following a review of the 3 new staff files presented on the day of inspection international police vetting was required for 2 staff members who had resided outside the jurisdiction for a period of greater than 6 months as an adult. While it is acknowledged that vetting disclosures were available there was no English translation available.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(2)(a) Reference check of the staff member has been completed and added to the file.

A staff file check list has been created to ensure all required document are added to staff files pre-commencement of employment.

(d) International police vetting for the two staff members has now been translated into English.

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A staff file checklist has been created to ensure all required document are added to staff files pre-commencement of employment.

Supporting documentation submitted

Copies of references. Police vetting x 2.

Summary Comment

The Inspectorate has reviewed the registered provider's response and supporting documentation. The actions taken by the registered provider have been accepted and will be reviewed at the next inspection.

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

(2) The following adult: child ratios were observed in the care rooms when the inspectors arrived at the premises:

Preschool Room:

There were 21 preschool children (aged 2 years 9 months to 4 years) attending this room with 2 staff members. The child adult ratios were correct.

The Baby Room:

There were 5 preschool children aged (10 months to 1 year and 9 months) attending this room with 2 adults. The child adult ratios were correct.

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(8) The registered provider ensured that there were 2 staff on the premises at all times.

Non-Compliance Information

(1) During the period of inspection there were not an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the pre-school service.

(2) The following adult: child ratios which were observed in the Toddler Room during the inspection were incorrect:

There were 7 preschool children (aged 2 years) attending this room with 1 staff.

Two adults were required at all times to satisfy the requirement of this regulation.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(1)and(2) One Child has moved to the preschool room reducing the ratio in the toddler room to 1:6. The child fully transitioned to this room on Friday 13/03/2026 and the decision was made in partnership with the child's parents, following careful consideration and review of the child's stage of development. The ratio in the preschool room is now 22:2.

The registered provider is continually striving to recruit new additional staff members. The service will reduce the number of childcare places for next year should it be unable to fill positions to ensure sufficient staffing levels are within compliance requirements to meet the needs of all children.

Supporting documentation submitted

Copies of roll books and copies of advertisements for staff.

Summary Comment

The Inspectorate has reviewed the registered provider's response and supporting documentation. The response has been accepted and the non-compliance addressed. The sustainment of these corrective actions will be reviewed at the next inspection.

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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;*

(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) – (g) A sample of thirty-five children's registration forms were reviewed. A form was available and completed for all the children in attendance.

(3)(c) The written records of the children's registration forms were available for inspection by the authorised officers.

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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:

- (h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis;*
- (i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;*
- (k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.*

Compliance Information

- (h) Documentary evidence was available of the daily attendance of each child in the service and included the arrival and departure times of each child.
- (i) An up-to-date weekly staff roster was available in the service and were reflective of the staff present in the service.
- (k) A sample of 10 accident and incident forms were reviewed. The records reviewed were complete and included the required information. For example: the incident details, the time and date of the incident, parent signature, the staff signature and managers signature indicating that they had reviewed the 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

There were 3 care rooms in operation in the service namely the Preschool Room, the Toddler Room and the Baby Room.

(1)(a) The following examples demonstrate how the registered provider ensured that children's learning, development, and well-being was facilitated in the service.

Basic needs:

- Throughout the service the children were observed to move freely in the care rooms.
- In the Baby and Toddler Rooms child-led sleep needs were facilitated in the service as the staff followed the children's routines. The staff were also alert to signs of tiredness displayed by the children. Children

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were observed sleeping when the inspectors arrived at the service and at various intervals throughout the day.

- The toilet trained children were encouraged to be independent with toileting. Those who were toilet training were frequently offered the opportunity to go to the toilet. Gentle handwashing reminders were also given to the children in the various rooms after toileting.
- Nappies were changed regularly and in a timely manner in the rooms with pleasant interactions observed between children and staff.
- Attention was given to personal care such as nose blowing, the use of bibs for feeding and cleaning faces of the smaller children after their dinner.
- The children brought in their own food for morning and afternoon snacks. Dinner was homemade on the day and consisted of mashed potatoes and soup. Dinners were saved for children who were sleeping and served once they woke up.
- Drink cups and bottles were available to the children on a low-level shelf in the Preschool Room.

Supporting Relationships:

- There was a key worker system in place in the Preschool Room with each key worker responsible for the documentation of their group of children's emerging interests and observations.
- Communication with parents was predominantly informal at drop off and pick up.
- The staff were observed to use gentle tones and positive language when communicating with children for example *"how are you today?"*, *"that's great ...!"*, *"its ok what's wrong?"*, *"gentle hands...well done..."*.

Non-Compliance Information

1. Three children aged between 10 and 15 months from the Baby Room were observed to be fed lying back in bouncy chairs. This is an inappropriate practice for feeding children of this age. It was further noted that there were highchairs available for feeding the children in the service.
2. One child was observed to climb over the 3 bouncy chairs which were lined up at the wall denying access to the wall mounted caterpillar. The child was lifted away instead of the bouncy chairs being removed to allow the child access to their chosen activity.

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Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The registered provider stated

1. Going forward all staff are to be made aware of children's stage of development and to encourage and support children to move from highchairs to low chairs and tables for feeding.
Bouncy chairs will only be used for comfort and relaxation .
2. The bouncy chairs have been removed to provide full access to the caterpillar.
All staff members to ensure children have easy access to play equipment and that play items are not obstructed by chairs/furniture.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence.

Summary Comment

The registered provider's response was reviewed and accepted. The non-compliances have been addressed.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 22 – Food and drink

A registered provider shall ensure that adequate and suitable, nutritious and varied food and drink is available for each pre-school child attending the pre-school service.

Non-Compliance Information

1. There was no evidence of a varied and nutritious menu for those children attending the service on a full-time basis. It was reported by a staff member that the children in the Baby Room usually got the same dinner every day i.e. mash potatoes with soup made from frozen vegetables and packet soup mixes blended. It was stated they do get a change to a bolognaise dinner on the day that it is made for the rest of the children attending and it is served with potato.
2. Although it was verbally reported a weekly menu was available for the older children - which consisted of either, pasta and mince, potatoes, fish fingers and beans, soup and potatoes or sausages and potatoes, no menu was available for review.

In addition these meal options offered lack protein and are high in salt content.

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Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

1. The menu has been updated to include different meals provided daily. All babies, toddlers, preschool and afterschool children have equal access to the dinner provided each day. Babies are provided with a variety of hot cooked nutritious dinners.

All educators will monitor children's food intake plus preference for meals and inform management so that menus can be adjusted and alternatives provided to ensure intake of all food groups.

2. The menu is now available and placed on the notice board where families can view it. The soup mix previously used has now been replaced with salt free stock to mix with vegetables.

Management and cooking staff have reviewed the nutritional standards for Early Learning and Care Services to ensure they are followed.

Supporting documentation submitted

None provided

Summary Comment

The Inspectorate has reviewed the response submitted by the registered provider and the assurances provided have been accepted. This will be for review at the next inspection.

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

Infection Control:

- There was a supply of aprons and gloves for nappy changing and these were observed to be used and disposed of correctly during nappy changing procedures.
- There was a continuous supply of thermostatically controlled hot water, liquid soap and paper towels to support effective hand-washing practices.
- The children's hands were washed regularly after messy play, after toileting and nappy changing and before lunch.
- The radiator surface temperatures were below the maximum surface temperature of 50 °C.

Non-Compliance Information

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The Inspectorate is not assured that adequate steps have been taken by the registered provider and staff to ensure the health, safety and welfare of the pre-school children attending the service based on the following observations made during the inspection:

General Safety:

1. There was a bottle of cough medicine sitting on top of the toy kitchen unit in the Preschool Room which was potentially accessible to the preschool children. This was a health and safety risk.
2. There was a staff handbag observed sitting on top of a box at a low level in the lobby of the sanitary accommodation off the Preschool Room. This was potentially accessible to any preschool child who accessed the toilets independently and therefore a health and safety risk.
3. In the Preschool and Toddler Rooms there were sharp unprotected corners on the low-level shelving units and on one of the tables used in the Preschool Room.
4. The large notice board on the wall in the Preschool Room was not adequately secured to the wall. Two children sitting underneath it for their lunch were observed to pull it out from the wall at the bottom. This was a potential impact and injury risk.

Infection Control:

5. The following cross infection risks were observed in the Toddler Room during handwashing:
 - 7 children were observed to wash their hands in a communal basin of water.
 - A grey cloth towel was observed in use by the 7 children for hand-drying.
6. There was no system in place for the laundering and management of linen in the service for cots that are shared. For example: it was observed that no cot linen was changed in cots that were shared between children attending the Baby and Toddler Rooms. When questioned a staff member confirmed this and stated that *"there was no spare linen available"*. This is at variance with the services safe sleeping policy that states *"children will have individual beds with their own blankets and sheets"*.
7. The lobby of the sanitary accommodation off the Preschool Room was used for the storage of toys and equipment. This is an infection control and cross contamination risk.
8. The perishable lunches items brought in by the children were not removed from the children's bags and stored appropriately in the fridge. This is an infection control risk.
9. The 'lion' flip lidded bin observed in use for the disposal of used hand towels in the nappy changing area was considered unsuitable. This required the staff and children using the bin to touch the lid multiple times which is a cross-infection risk.

Safe Sleep:

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10. In the Baby Room during sleep time, sleep observations were not always documented by the staff member carrying out the physical observation e.g. the registered provider who was present in the care room was observed to document the 10-minute physical sleep observations which was carried out by another staff member.
11. The room temperature was not documented as part of the 10-minute physical sleep observation. Additionally, the staff carrying out the sleep observations did not 'check' the room thermometer that was located on a high shelf.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. The bottle of cough medicine was removed and all medicines are clearly labelled with child's name and stored in the medicine box in kitchen or on high shelf in care room.
A staff meeting was held on the 10/03/2026 and the Administration of Medication Policy was reviewed with all staff members.
2. The staff members handbag was removed from the lobby area of sanitary accommodation off the Preschool Room.
All staff notified that personal handbags and belongings must not be left in rooms or lobby areas accessible to children.
3. All sharp unprotected corners have now been covered with Safety Corner Guards in the toddler and preschool room.
The risk assessment for both the toddler room and preschool room has been updated to include 'All sharp Corners with edges covered' to be checked daily and replaced as required.
4. The two large notice boards in the preschool room have now been fully secured to the wall.
All staff have been reminded to continuously be aware of maintenance issues/hazards and report to the management immediately. Management will ensure maintenance issues are corrected in a timely manner.

Infection Control:

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5. All staff members were informed that children's hands are to be washed at the sink and hands dried with their own individual disposable hand towel at all times, including after engaging in sensory play experiences.
The hand-washing policy was reviewed and updated. A staff meeting was held on the 10/03/2026 and the Hand-Washing Policy was reviewed with all staff members.
6. All staff have been informed that there is always a sufficient stock of clean laundry in the hot press at all times. Children's individual laundry boxes are clearly labelled where their individual bed-linen is stored. Safe sleep Policy was reviewed and updated . On the 10/03/2026 a staff meeting was held, where the Safe Sleep Policy and Infection Control Policy was reviewed with all staff members.
7. The lobby area of the sanitary accommodation off the preschool room has been fully cleared of equipment and toys.
Staff have been informed that toys and equipment are no longer allowed in this lobby area. The Infection Control Policy was also reviewed with all staff on the 10/03/2026.
8. All perishable lunches brought in by the children are removed from their bags when they arrive in preschool. They are labelled with their name and stored in the fridge.
All staff reviewed the health and safety policy on the 10/03/2026 to ensure that all staff follow correct procedures in relation to storage of food.
9. The flip-lidded bin has been removed from the bathroom.
The registered provider has ensured that any bins bought for the preschool service in the future, will be a foot-operated pedal bin to prevent touching the lid of the bin and the risk of cross-infection.

Safe Sleep:

10. The staff member who completes the 10-minute physical observation of children sleeping, documents details of their observation.
The Safe Sleep Policy was updated and reviewed by all staff during a staff meeting held on the 10/03/2026 for the purpose of ensuring best practise going forward.
11. All staff now check and document the room temperature as part of the 10-minute physical sleep observation.
The Safe Sleep Policy was updated and it was reviewed by all staff during the staff meeting on the 10/03/2026 to ensure best practise going forward.

Supporting documentation submitted

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Photographic evidence, copy of staff sign off sheet on policies reviewed.

Summary Comment

The Inspectorate has reviewed the registered provider's response and supporting evidence. These responses have been accepted and the non-compliances 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 was maintained of all fire drills which had been completed in the service, the last recorded 16/1/26.
- (b) A record was kept of the number, type and maintenance of the fire-fighting equipment dated 10/25 and 16/12/25 respectively.
- (4) Notices of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire were conspicuously displayed in the premises.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

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Regulation 29 - Premises

A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-

(d) cleaned, maintained and repaired, as required, and

Non-Compliance Information

(d) There were 2 holes in the ceiling of the sanitary accommodation off the Preschool Room.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(d) The two holes in the sanitary accommodation in the pre-school bathroom have now been filled.

All staff were reminded at the meeting on the 10/03/2026 that any hazards /and or maintenance issues are to be reported to senior management immediately.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence.

Summary Comment

The registered provider's response was reviewed and accepted. The non-compliances have been addressed.