

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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Dates of Inspection:	16/11/2023
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Date 2 of Inspection:	23/11/2023
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No of pre-school children:	AM	23	PM	19
Day 2	AM	24	PM	-

Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	No.18 The Grange Plantation Walk 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 located in a converted bungalow on the outskirts of Monaghan town. There is off road parking directly outside the building for drop off and collection. There is a large outdoor area to the back of the house. Additionally, the premises contains 2 sleep rooms, a kitchen and 2 sanitary areas one with a nappy changing area. The service has 3 care rooms in operation. A full day care service is provided and operates between the hours of 8am – 6.15pm. The service caters for a maximum of 35 preschool children aged 0 – 6 years. A service is also provided to school aged children in the afternoon.

Staffing

The registered provider and 6 childcare staff work directly with the pre-school children on a daily basis. One student also attends the service.

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. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9, 11, 19, 20, 22, 28; however, on inspection additional non-compliance which posed a risk was identified under Regulation 23. 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.

Additional Information

A safety Immediate Action Notice was issued on day 1 of inspection 16/11/23 in relation to raised radiator surface temperatures which were a potential burns risk. A satisfactory response addressing the non-compliance was received from the registered provider on the 17/11/23.

Acknowledgments

The inspectors wish to acknowledge the co-operation 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) & (b) The service had a designated person in charge who is also the registered provider and a named deputy person to deputise as required. Both were on the premises when the inspectors arrived and were present throughout the inspection.

Files for 7 staff members and 1 student were reviewed:

(2)(a) & (b) There were 2 written and validated references from a past employer or an alternative source. available for 3 members of staff.

Two staff had 1 written and validated reference and 3 written references were also available.

(c) Documentary evidence of a processed Garda vetting disclosure was available for each member of staff in the service including the registered provider and the 1 student.

(d) International police vetting was available for the 2 staff members who had lived outside the Irish jurisdiction for a period of 6 months or more as an adult. A second police vetting which was also required was also available for 1 of these adults.

(4) Documentary evidence was available to demonstrate that 6 out of 7 members of staff, who work directly with the pre-school had a minimum Level 5 childcare qualification.

Non-Compliance Information

(2)(a) The following was noted in respect of staff references.

- One staff member and the student in the service did not have 2 written and validated references.
- One staff member required a 2nd written and validated reference.
- Three written references required validation.

(4) There was no documentary evidence available for inspection to show that a 7th staff member had a minimum Level 5 childcare qualification.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(2)(a) References have been received and validated for all staff and students since the inspection took place.

(4) The 7th staff member has no childcare responsibilities in the service, their tasks include cleaning and some clerical work therefore do not need a minimum Level 5 qualification.

The registered provider will ensure that all staff and student's references are provided and verified before staff start in the service.

This staff member is not counted in staff ratio and does not care for the children in the setting. We ensure our ratios are correct at all times.

Supporting documentation submitted

Copies of written and validated references.

Summary Comment

The Inspectorate has accepted the registered provider's response and the non-compliances have been addressed.

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) On the day of inspection when the inspectors arrived unannounced to the service there were three rooms in operation. During the inspection there were an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the service.

(2) The following adult : child ratios were observed in the three care rooms:

Day 1:

Baby Room: There were 3 preschool children aged between 7 months to 1 year present with 2 staff members including the registered provider.

Toddler Room: There were 6 preschool children aged between 1 to 2 years present with 1 staff member.

The Preschool Room: There were 14 preschool children aged between 3 years and 5 years present with 2 staff members.

Day 2:

Baby Room: There were 3 preschool children aged between 7 months to 1 year present with 1 staff member.

Toddler Room: There were 6 preschool children aged between 1 to 2 years present with 2 staff members.

The Preschool Room: There were 15 preschool children aged between 3 years and 5 years present with 2 staff members.

(8)(a) Following a discussion with the registered provider and a review of the available documentation e.g., staff rotas and children’s attendance records, this information demonstrated that there were at least 2 adults on the premises at all times.

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,

Compliance Information

There were 3 rooms in operation on the day of the inspection namely The Baby Room, The Toddler Room and The Preschool Room.

Basic Needs:

- Nappies were changed regularly and in a timely manner with lots of friendly interaction observed between children and staff in all rooms. Independence in toileting was promoted for those older children who were toilet trained.
- The children’s care needs were attended to on a regular basis; for example hands were washed before meal times, after messy play and noses were cleaned throughout the day.
- The children from the Preschool Room accessed the outside area and all children were dressed appropriately to go outside.
- Minor behavioural issues were addressed and not allowed to escalate with staff positively engaging with the children by saying “I don’t think likes that in their face”.

Supporting Relationships

- The adults throughout the service were observed to interact with the children in a warm and supportive manner. Positive and respectful language were observed in interactions between the children and staff in the rooms e.g. “great help”, “just brilliant” and “lovely manners”. The staff sat with children during activities and engaged in outdoor play.
- Verbal feedback with parents was observed to occur at pick-up and drop off times. It was also reported that phone calls and text messages are used in the communication with parents.

Physical And Material Environment:

- In general, the children attending the service had free movement within their care rooms. The physical and material environment, both indoors and outdoors, supported children’s learning and development. The care rooms contained a suitable range of play materials and equipment which were appropriate for the age and developmental stage of the children and laid out to accommodate the needs and interests of the children in the rooms. These were stored on open low-level shelves and were freely and readily accessible to the children. Montessori equipment was also available in the Preschool Room.

Programme of Activities

- There was evidence of the children’s artwork on display in the Toddler and Preschool Rooms e.g., “handprints of friendship”, pictures of the children on flowers “when we learn we grow”, fingerprint friendship tree, cotton bud art work “Our handy work” and healthy eating collages.
- Documentary evidence of medium and short planning was available for the Toddler and Preschool Rooms.
- Child led activities were observed for example, singing songs - prior to lunch being served a number of children were asked what they would like to sing.

Non-Compliance Information

The registered provider did not ensure that each child’s learning, development, and well-being was facilitated within the daily life of the service in relation to the following:

BASIC NEEDS:

1. The consistency of some of the dinners was inappropriate for the age and stage of development of the children. For example two children aged 2 years 7 months were observed to receive a pureed dinner.

Programme of Activities

2. There was no evidence of curriculum planning in the Baby Room. This was further confirmed by the registered provider who stated that “there was no curriculum plans at the minute and they were going on training”.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Action

1. The registered provider stated that dinners have a variety of textures, sometimes children prefer their dinner to be mashed. These children do get a variety of food with different textures at other times of the day such as toast in the mornings and during snack times.

- The registered provider contacted an outside agency and had a visit from their Development Officer. The room leader was provided with many different ideas how to support the developmental needs of the child through sensory play, songs and other activities. Treasure baskets have been created and staff have reviewed the equipment and toys in the room to ensure they meet the age and stage of the children's development. Curriculum plans are being filled out each week.

Preventive Action

- Ensuring children have a variety of textures in their snack. Provide parents with healthy, age-appropriate snack ideas that can be sent in. Encouraging children to try different foods at dinner and snack time.
- Review curriculum plans regularly and provide staff with support in completing the plans. Encourage staff to complete regular continuous professional development

Supporting documentation submitted

Samples of short term curriculum plans for the Baby Room submitted.

Summary Comment

The registered provider's response is accepted and the non-compliance has been addressed. This will be for review at the next inspection.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 20 – Facilities for rest and play

(1) Subject to this regulation, a registered provider shall ensure that-

(b) there are adequate and suitable facilities for a pre-school child to rest during the day, and in the case of an overnight pre-school service, during the day

(3) A registered provider of a full day care service, a part-time day care service or a childminding service, other than such a service to which paragraph (2) applies, shall ensure that-

(a) a suitable, safe and secure outdoor space to which the pre-school children attending the service have access on a daily basis is provided on the premises

Compliance Information

(1)(b)

- A suitable comfortable rest area was available in each of the care rooms, with soft mats and cushions provided, should a child need to rest or take a break from activities during the day.
- Two separate sleep rooms were located off the hallway; Room 1 and Room 2 and each, contained 3 standard cots. While no child over 2 years were observed to sleep during the inspection adequate sleep facilities were available if required.

(3) The outdoor area was located to the rear of the premises. It was enclosed and gated and had a variety of surfaces including a grass area and concreted area which was partially covered. A number of interest areas were available including; a mud kitchen, painting easel, “Little Rascals Farm” planting beds, a seesaw, a willow tunnel, a small plastic frame and slide, musical wall water shoots, bug hotel, a grass covered tunnel and large wooden playhouse. A shed was also available for the storage of toys.

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.

Compliance Information

Healthy eating was promoted in the service and there was a menu on display. Food and snacks were provided by the parents for morning and afternoon snacks. Lunches were observed to consist of fruit, yoghurts, bread sticks, wraps and crackers. Perishable food items were observed to be correctly stored in a fridge. A homemade meal of spaghetti bolognese was prepared by the registered provider during day 1 of the inspection. Young children were encouraged to feed themselves and assistance was also provided if required. Drinks were freely accessible in the Preschool Room in individual named cups and there was potable water available in the service.

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.

Non-Compliance Information

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

Infection Control:

1. The children's hands were not washed after nappy changing and one staff member did not wash their hands after carrying out a nappy change.
2. Ineffective hand washing practices were observed. For example; a staff member used only cold water and no soap to wash their hands.
3. Two staff members were observed carrying out nappy changes and did not wear a disposable apron. In addition, the requirement to wear disposable aprons was not detailed in the services nappy changing policy as per best practice guidelines.
4. The polythene gloves observed in use for nappy changing were unsuitable as per best practice guidance.
5. When questioned about the cleaning process for toys in the service, the staff member stated to the inspector that a chlorine-based cleaning product and water was being used to clean the toys and equipment. This is at variance with best practice guidelines.

General Safety:

6. The surface temperatures of the radiators in the service ranged between 52.7 – 64° C in the sleep rooms, Preschool Room, sanitary accommodation off the Preschool Room, the Baby and Toddler Room which exceeded the safe radiator surface temperature of 50° C. This is a burns risk.
7. The 4 metal posts of the gazebo in the covered area in the outdoor area were unprotected and a potential injury hazard.
8. In the Preschool Room the CD player was unsecured, it had a trailing wire and was accessible to the children. This is a potential impact and safety hazard.
9. In the Preschool Room antibacterial spray was left on the low-level windowsill and accessible to the children. This is a safety risk.

Safe Sleep:

10. A fleece blanket was observed in use in the sleep on a sleeping child under 1 year of age.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

Infection Control:

- 1 and 2. We have discussed during our staff meeting the importance of hand washing for staff and children. We have reviewed the hand washing and infection control policies and procedures with all and ensured everyone understands the importance of hand washing.
- 3 The use of disposable aprons has been included in the nappy changing policy.
- 4 We have reviewed the gloves that were in use, we checked and ensured that the other gloves we have in use are in line with the Management of Infectious Diseases guidelines.
- 5 We will ensure staff clean toys will be cleaned with washing up liquid and warm water and then disinfected after this.

General Safety:

- 6 This was replied to in the immediate action notice. The heating was adjusted, and the radiators monitored until they reached the appropriate temperature.
- 7 An upholstery company are making covers for the poles of the gazebo in the outdoor area. Children are monitored closely outside around the gazebo area to ensure their safety.
- 8 The CD player has been moved to a higher shelf in the preschool room out of reach of all children.
- 9 The staff in the preschool room will ensure that the antibacterial is always out of reach of the children.

Safe Sleep:

- 10 This blanket belonged to the child and is used to comfort the child. The blanket is removed and a cellular blanket is put in place when the child has settled and sleeping.

Infection Control:

1. Management will review and assess all staffs hand washing techniques and ensure children's hands are being washed.
2. Provide hand washing training to all new and current staff when they commence employment and annually.
3. Complete spot checks to ensure aprons are being worn during nappy changing and hand washing is being completed correctly.
4. Ensure the correct gloves are being bought and supplied.
5. Create an instruction manual for washing toys.
6. Checking the radiators temperature daily and recording it on the risk assessment form.
7. Children are monitored closely outside around the gazebo area to ensure their safety until the covers arrive.

8. The CD player will remain on the high shelf at all times. (see photographic evidence attached).
9. Basket with label has been put on the high shelf to store the antibacterial spray and cleaning products. Out of the reach of all children. (see photo attached)
10. Cellular blankets are left on the side of cots to ensure they are used instead of other blankets. (see photo attached).

Supporting documentation submitted

Copy of updated nappy changing policy, risk assessment sheets of sleep room and care rooms and photographic evidence.

Summary Comment

The Inspectorate has reviewed the responses and supporting information. Non-compliances No.1 - 6 and 8 – 10 have been accepted and have addressed the non-compliances.

Following a telephone call with the person on charge on 7/3/24 non-compliance No.7 has not been adequately addressed as the protective covers have not yet been received. This remains outstanding. All non-compliances will be for review at the next inspection.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

Documentary evidence of an up-to-date insurance certificate was on display in the service which detailed adequate cover for 35 children on a full day care basis, which expires on 27/03/2024.