

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015TY032
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Name of Service:	Laochra Beaga
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Address of Service:	Scoil Eoin Naofa, Golden Grove Road, Roscrea, Co. Tipperary
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Eircode:	E53 W562
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Name of Registered Provider:	Rory McGrath
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	16/12/2024
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No of pre-school children:	AM	19	PM	8
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	North Tipperary Civic Offices, Limerick Road, Nenagh, Co. Tipperary
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Inspection undertaken by:	L McGeeney and S Early O'Brien
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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

This sessional service was established to provide care and education to children aged between 2 and 6 years old. The service operates two sessions each day, the first from 8:45am to 11.45am and the second from 12pm to 3pm, Monday to Friday for 38 weeks of the year. Places are funded under the early childhood care and education scheme (ECCE) for eligible children.

A registered school aged care service is also provided. Both services are operated in separate rooms in Scoil Eoin Naofa national school in the town of Roscrea in north Tipperary. The preschool service had access to an activity room, sanitary accommodation area, a sensory room, the school hall and an outdoor play area.

This is one of two services in north Tipperary operated by the registered provider, the other being Laochra Beaga Newport.

Staffing

The registered provider does not work in the service but is available to call on when required. The service manager is the person in charge on a daily basis. There are three staff, including the manager and staff employed under the access and inclusion model (AIM), employed to work directly with the children in 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/ premises and facilities. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under the following regulations:

Regulation 9(2)(4) – Management and Recruitment

Regulation 11(1)(3)(8) – Staffing levels

Regulation 15 – Record of a pre-school child

Regulation 20 – Facilities for rest and play

Regulation 21 – Equipment and materials

Regulation 22 – Food and drink

Regulation 24 – Checking in and out and record of attendance

Regulation 28 – Insurance

However, on inspection an additional non-compliance which posed a risk was identified under Regulation 23 – Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulation within this report.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 15 Record of a Preschool Child.

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

(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

The staff files of the three members of staff were reviewed as part of the inspection process:

(2)(a) Written, validated references from past employers were available in respect of the three members of staff.

(b) Written, validated references from a source other than a past employer were available in respect of two members of staff.

(c) Garda vetting had been carried out in respect of each member of staff and relevant records were maintained on file. A system was in place to ensure that staff were re-vetted on a three-yearly basis in line with best practice.

(d) Not applicable as none of the staff had lived outside the state for a period exceeding six consecutive months.

(4) All of the staff held recognised qualifications in early childhood care and education at levels 5 or 6 on the national framework of qualifications.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 11 - Staffing levels

(1) Subject to this Regulation, a registered provider shall ensure that there is at all times an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the pre-school service.

(3) Subject to paragraph (5), a registered provider of a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that at all times the minimum ratio of adults to children specified in column (3) of Part 2 of Schedule 6 opposite a particular reference number specified in column (1) of that Part in respect of the age range of the children specified in column (2) therefore at that reference number is satisfied.

(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) The registered provider ensured that there was an adequate number of staff working directly with children in the pre-school.

(3) On the day of inspection, the required ratios were maintained as follows;

In the morning session, there were 3 staff working directly with 18 children.

In the afternoon of inspection, there were 3 staff working directly with 9 children.

(8)(a) There were at least two staff present while the service was in operation.

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.*

Compliance Information

A sample size of eleven completed registration forms were assessed as part of the inspection process:

- (1) The registration forms held all of the information required under parts (a) to (i) of this regulation.

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-

(a) having regard to the number of pre-school children attending the service, their respective ages and the amount of time they spend on the premises, there are adequate and suitable facilities for each child to play indoors and, where required by these Regulations, outdoors, during the day, and

(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 and the night.

(4) Where outdoor space to which the pre-school children attending the service have access is provided on the premises of a sessional pre-school service other than such a service to which paragraph (2) applies, a temporary pre-school service or a pre-school service in a drop-in centre, the registered provider shall ensure that such outdoor space is suitable, safe and secure.

Compliance Information

(1)(a) The children attended the service for three hours per day, during which time they had access to their pre-school room, the school hall, a sensory room and outdoor play facilities. The pre-school room was a large square room, lit by natural light through windows along two walls. The room was well laid out to facilitate freedom of movement between and within interest areas.

The children enjoyed daily access to the school hall for physical movement and play on a timetabled basis. On the day of inspection the older children were taken to the hall to watch the school concert.

The sensory room was shared with the children from the Tús Maith early intervention class and used for small groups or one to one activities when children needed a break from the usual activities in the pre-school room.

The children enjoyed outdoor play on a daily basis in the dedicated outdoor play area at the back of the pre-school room. This area was shared by the children from the pre-school and those attending the Tús Maith class.

(b) Sleep facilities were not required as the children attended for a maximum of three hours each day and all were aged over three years old. There were cosy seating areas where the children could rest and relax away from the activities. The children also had shared access to the sensory room where children could relax and unwind on the soft floor and vinyl covered cushions. Sensory resources such as aromatherapy, sound, water and light effects were available to support self-regulation and relaxation.

(4) Children had access to an outdoor play area located to the rear of the preschool room. On the day of inspection, the children were observed to spend time outdoors in the play area. The space was enclosed by fencing and gates and had a combination of concrete, tarmacadam and soft fall surfaces.

In this space, children had access to suitable and safe equipment and were free to choose which area to play in. In the equipment available, their physical, language, social and emotional development was supported.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 21 – Equipment and materials

A registered provider shall ensure that there is adequate and suitable furniture, play and work equipment and materials available on the premises of the pre-school service.

Compliance Information

The tables and chairs provided in the service were suitable for the age and stage of development of the children attending the service.

A sufficient amount of materials for the number of children attending were available on low level shelving and were observed to be easily accessible to the children.

The play equipment and materials were observed to be durable and easy to clean.

The equipment available included jigsaws, small world houses and garages with people; cars, tractors and animals; 2 large trays on stands for messy play, one with flour representing snow for winter and the other with water where children were observed to wash babies and action figures. There were opportunities for solitary and small group play. Construction toys, and sensory toys were among the large array of materials available also.

The presence of a family wall display on the window and children’s artwork in the room, demonstrated a sense of identity and belonging for the children.

The outdoor area and the equipment and materials available provided appropriate learning opportunities for the children based on their age and stage of development. On the day of inspection, the children played outdoors and were adequately dressed with warm jackets, hats and gloves. They were observed to have autonomy in leading their play choices without the direction of the adults.

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

The service had a healthy eating policy in place. Children’s snacks were provided from home and perishable items were stored in a refrigerator in the preschool room. On the day of inspection, children’s lunches consisted of fruit, crackers, sandwiches, cheese, rice cakes and yogurt. Children were supported and encouraged to be independent in opening and closing their individual lunchboxes, bags and bottles. Support was promptly offered to those children who required assistance.

Staff were aware of and sensitive to the children’s special dietary requirements and cultural practices around food.

Children brought their own drinks which included water, squash and fruit juice. Drinking water was also available from the tap in the pre-school room.

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:

Staff sat with and supervised the children while they ate their food. There was a fridge for the storage of perishable foods.

There were windows along the length of two walls of the room and along one wall of the short corridor between the entrance door and the room. This gave the children and staff a clear view of who was in the school yard and of anyone who sought entry to the pre-school.

At the end of the session, staff walked the children across the yard to the school gates and waited there with them until a parent or guardian arrived to collect them.

Infection Control:

There was a cleaning schedule for the service. Staff were observed sweeping the floor during the day as required. The tables were wiped down between the morning and the afternoon sessions.

Administration of Medication:

The service had a medication policy and sought signed consent from parents before administering medications to any child attending the service. None of the children were in receipt of medication on the day of inspection.

Safe Sleep:

Not applicable to this service as all children attended on a sessional basis and did not sleep while attending the service.

Fire Safety:

Fire escape routes were kept clear of obstruction.

Non-Compliance Information

Infection Control:

A number of practices observed during the inspection did not support effective infection prevention and control:

1. Children did not wash their hands before eating or on returning inside from outdoor play.
2. The tables, which were used for multiple purposes including table-top activities, messy play activities and dining, were not wiped down between uses, in particular the tables were not wiped down to prepare them for snack time.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

Infection Control:

All staff have been spoken to on the non-compliance and have been reminded the importance of infection control.

1. Although sanitiser has always been used on entering the setting and before snack etc physical hand washing has now been built into the daily routine before snack and on re-entering the class room from outdoor play.
2. The daily cleaning schedule has been updated, and table washing has been added more frequently to remind staff of the necessity and importance of keeping tables clean.

Supporting documentation submitted

Infection Control:

A copy of the updated cleaning schedule for the service was received by the offices of the early years inspectorate on 29 January 2025.

Summary Comment

All evidence submitted meets the requirements Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 24 - Checking in and out and record of attendance

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that each pre-school child attending the service is checked in and out of the service by an employee or an unpaid worker.

(3) A registered provider shall ensure that-

(a) no person other than-

(i) pre-school child attending the service,

(ii) a person dropping or collecting such a child,

(iii) an employee, or

(iv) an unpaid worker, can enter the premises without his or her entry being approved by an employee, and

Compliance Information

(1) The children's daily attendance was recorded using an application designed for this purpose. Each child's arrival and departure times were recorded by a member of staff. If a child was absent this was also recorded using the app.

(3) Staff met visitors to the service at the entrance door before allowing them entry if appropriate.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The service had current insurance for a sessional and afterschool service, catering for up to 22 pre-school children and 36 school-aged children at any one time, valid until 27 March 2025.