

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015TY060
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Name of Service:	Rahealty N.S. Pre-School
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Address of Service:	c/o Rahealty, 1 The Glebe, Mill Road, Thurles, Co. Tipperary
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Eircode:	E41 YV10
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Name of Registered Provider:	Monica Galvin
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Service type:	Part Time
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Date of Inspection:	11/09/2024
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No of pre-school children:	AM	17	PM	17
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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 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 part-time service was established to provide care and education to children aged between 2 and 6 years old. The service operates Monday to Friday, 8.45am to 1.30pm for 38 weeks of the year. This includes a daily three-hour session funded under the early childhood care and education scheme (ECCE) for eligible children. All of the children attended on a part-time basis on the day of the inspection.

The service is operated from a room in Rahealty National School, near the town of Thurles in north Tipperary. The children have access to their room, sanitary accommodation areas in the school and use of the school grounds for outdoor play.

Staffing

The registered provider and a second member of staff work directly with the children in the service on a daily basis. Both staff hold recognised qualifications in early childhood care and education at levels 6 or 8 on the national qualifications framework.

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 regulations 9(2)(4), 11(1)(2)(4)(8), 20(1)(3), 21, 22, 24(1)(3), 25, 26(1)(4), 28 and 30.

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, 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 both members of staff were reviewed as part of the inspection process:

(2)(a) Written references from past employers, with validations where required, were available in respect of both staff.

(b) A written, validated reference from a source other than a past employer was available in respect of one member of staff.

(c) Garda vetting had been carried out in respect of both members of staff and relevant documents were kept on file. The service had a system in place for re-vetting staff on a three-yearly basis in line with best practice.

(d) Not applicable as neither member of staff had lived outside the state for a period exceeding six consecutive months.

(4) Staff held recognised qualifications in early childhood care and education at levels 6 or 8 on the national qualifications framework.

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.

(4) Subject to paragraph (5), where a registered provider contemporaneously provides-

(a) a sessional pre-school service, and

(b) a full day care service or a part-time day care service, or both, the minimum ratio of adults to children applicable for the duration of the sessional pre-school service in respect of the children attending that service shall be the ratio specified in paragraph (3).

(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) There was adequate staffing to meet the needs of the children for the 3 hours between 9.30am and 12.30pm. There were 2 staff working directly with 17 children on the day of the inspection, all of the children attended on a part-time basis, that is, for between 3.5 and 5 hours. The children were aged between 2.5 and 5 years old, with 6 children aged between 2 and 3 years old and 11 children aged over 3 years old.

(4) The adult to child ratio was maintained within the requirements of 1 adult to 11 children aged between 2.5 and 6 years old for the duration of the three-hour sessional service between 9.30am and 12.30pm.

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

Non-Compliance Information

(1) There were insufficient staff working directly with the children at times during the day when the ratios changed from sessional to part-time and when the care needs of the younger children required more staff, such as during nappy changing.

(2) The adult to child ratio was not maintained when the service reverted to the required ratios for a part-time service, outside of the hours of the sessional service. The regulations require that there be at least 1 adult to 6 children aged between 2 and 3 years old and 1 adult to 8 children aged over 3 years old working directly with the children in a part-time service. Therefore, on the day of inspection a minimum of 3 staff were required in the service before 9.30am and after 12.30pm.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

This service has now employed an employee to correct this non-compliance and will ensure that correct ratios are in place.

Summary Comment

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

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.

(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)(a) The children had exclusive use of their room, which was bright and comfortable. The room was set up to support the children to explore and learn through play. The service had its own outdoor play area in the school yard, directly outside the door used to access the service. They also had access to the school playing fields for outdoor play and exploration.

(b) There was a cosy area in the corner of the room where the children could sit and relax with a book when they wanted to.

(3)(a) The playground for the children attending the service was separated from the rest of the school yard by metal gates and fences. This area had a tarmacadam surface, topped with soft fall matting under and around the climbing and sliding equipment. There was a three-sided shelter in the corner of the yard where the children could engage in outdoor play in all weathers. This area held a storage unit for outdoor play equipment.

On the day of inspection the children used the schools playing fields for outdoor play. This area was enclosed by hedging, trees and a metal gate. The ground surface was grass and the children could see the surrounding fields and countryside from this space. On the day of inspection the children explored this area looking for mushrooms, chased their shadows, ran and played with balls and hoops.

Non-Compliance Information

(1)(b) On the day of inspection there were six children aged between 2 and 3 years old attending the service on a part-time basis, for up to 5 hours per day. Several of these children required a sleep during the day, in accordance with their individual sleep and rest schedules. There was no rest area set up where these children could lie down to rest or sleep during the day. It is acknowledged that there were a number of fold-out sleep mats available that could be placed on the floor for the children to sleep on when needed, however, this was inadequate to meet the sleep and rest needs of the children present on the day of inspection. One of the youngest children was observed sleeping on a yoga mat in a narrow space between the tables and chairs and the open shelves, where he had laid down when he got tired.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The sleep/rest area has been moved away from the library. There is an area set aside where child/ren can rest. The sleep area will be kept in place where children can access it.

Summary Comment

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

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 service was well equipped both indoors and outdoors with furniture, toys and materials suitable to the age and stage of development of the children and their individual interests.

There were child and adult sized tables and chairs. These were moved into various configurations during the day according to the activities engaged in, for example, the tables were separated to create interest stations during freeplay time, stacked to the sides of the room for circle time and reconfigured in the centre of the room for mealtimes.

Toys and materials were stored on open shelving units around the room, which made them visible and easily accessible to the children.

An interactive whiteboard had been installed since the last inspection on 18 November 2021. This was used to support learning at times during the day, such as circle time when shapes, colours and songs could be displayed for all the children to see and hear. Staff said it was also used to play short videos that linked to the current themes or interests of the children, such as tractors ploughing a field or harvesting.

Equipment and materials included art, craft and mark making materials, books, puzzles, small world toys, imaginative play materials, construction materials, sensory materials and manipulative play materials.

Outdoor toys and equipment included balls, hoops, slides, play houses, blackboards, climbing frames, and fairy gardens.

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. The children brought packed lunches from home. The children brought enough food for their morning lunch break and an afternoon snack. Most of the children brought healthy lunches and reminders were sent to encourage parents to send foods that were not highly processed, or high in sugar or salt.

Foods eaten on the day of inspection included: rice cakes, crackers and cheese, sandwiches, brioche rolls, rice pudding, fromage frais, yoghurt, fruit and vegetables (grapes, strawberries, carrot sticks, peppers, bananas and apples). Children brought their own drink bottles filled with water, squash or milk. Drink bottles were refilled with water when empty. The children could access and drink from their own drink bottles as required throughout the day.

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.

Compliance Information

- (1) Staff were responsible for recording the arrival and departure times of the children. There was a printed weekly attendance record for this purpose with the children's names pre-populated on it and space to record their daily attendance.
- (3) The premises was kept secured, with admission to the school managed by the school staff and admission to the pre-school managed by the pre-school staff. No-one could enter the premises unless permitted to do so by a member of staff.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 25 - First aid

- (1) A registered provider shall ensure that a person trained in first aid for children is, at all times, immediately available to the children attending the pre-school service.*
- (2) A registered provider shall ensure that a suitably equipped first aid box for children-*
- (a) is safely stored in an easily accessible and conspicuous position on the premises, and*
 - (b) is available to the children attending the pre-school service at all times.*

Compliance Information

- (1) Both staff held current certification in first aid response (FAR) valid until 25 May 2026.
- (2)(a) A suitably equipped first aid bag was available on a shelf in the pre-school room. The first aid bag was brought outside when the children were engaged in outdoor play so that it was easily accessible if required.
- (b) The first aid bag was available if required by any child attending the service.

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) There was a written record of the fire drills that took place in the service. Fire drills were carried out on a monthly basis during term time.
- (b) There was a written record of the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises. The firefighting equipment was serviced on an annual basis, most recently on 6 September 2024. The smoke alarm system was serviced on a quarterly basis, most recently on 19 June 2024.
- (4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire was displayed in the service and above each fire extinguisher along the corridor outside the room used by the service.

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 up to 22 children attending a part-time daycare, valid until 27 March 2025.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 30 - Minimum space requirements

(1) Subject to paragraphs (2) to (6), a registered provider shall ensure that adequate clear floor space is available in the premises for the work, play and movement of children attending the pre-school service.

(2) A registered provider of a full day care service or a part-time day care service shall ensure that the minimum amount of clear floor space specified in column (3) of Schedule 7 opposite a particular reference number specified in column (1) of that Schedule in respect of the age range of children specified in column (2) thereof at that reference number is available for each child in that age range attending the service.

(4) Where a registered provider contemporaneously provides-

(a) a sessional pre-school service, and

(b) a full day care service or a part-time day care service, or both,

the minimum clear floor space applicable for the duration of the sessional preschool service in respect of the children attending that service shall be the floor space specified in paragraph (3).

Compliance Information

(1) The room used by the children was measured on a previous inspection at 34.77m². The number of children that can be accommodated in this space is determined by the number of hours each child spends in the service and their ages. For the duration of the sessional service, the space requirement for each child was 1.818m². The 17 children present on the day of inspection required 30.9m² of clear floor space during the session between 9.30am and 12.30pm. There was sufficient space available to the children at that time.

Non-Compliance Information

(2) and (4) The space requirements of the children increased outside of the hours of the sessional service. Children aged between 2 and 3 years old required 2.35m² per child, while children aged over 3 years old required 2.3m² per child. On the day of inspection, when the sessional service was over and the service reverted to the requirements for a part-time service the 6 children aged between 2 and 3 years old required 14.1m² and the 11 children aged over 3 years old required 25.3m². Therefore the 17 children present in the service after 12.30pm required 39.4m² of clear floor space, which was more space than was available in the room.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The service has secured the use of another room in the main school and will rotate children to this area for small group activities.

Summary Comment

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