

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2016CC015
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Name of Service:	Rainbow Rascals Montessori School
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Address of Service:	22 Hawthorn Ave, Inniscarra View, Ballincollig, Co. Cork
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Eircode:	P31 X375
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Name of Registered Provider:	Bernie Owens
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	01/09/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	11	PM	9
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	2 nd Floor, Estuary House, Henry Street, Limerick, V94 XT5F
Inspection undertaken by:	S O'Brien
Title:	Early Years Inspector

Authority to Inspect

The Tusla Early Years Inspectorate carries out inspections of Early Years Services under Section 58(J) of the Child Care Act 1991 (as inserted by Section 92 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013).

Conditions if applicable	N/A
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Description of service

Rainbow Rascals Montessori School was established as a private sessional preschool in 1993 and is situated in Ballincollig, Co Cork. The service offers the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme to children aged from 2 to 6 years. The service operates from 8:50am to 12pm and from 12:30pm to 3:30pm, Monday to Friday, 38 weeks of the year. The premises consists of one playroom and sanitary facilities which is adjacent to the registered providers private residence. The children have access to an outdoor area located at the rear of the building which is fully enclosed.

Staffing

The registered provider is based in the service. On the day of inspection, the registered provider was operating the service singlehandedly. An emergency person was available if required.

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.

Inspection findings are documented in the inspection report which is first issued in draft format to the service with an opportunity to respond to any findings. Where statutory requirements are identified as not being met, the registered provider must demonstrate how they have rectified the non-compliance and will prevent any non -

compliance from re occurring. The Corrective Action and Preventive Action plan (CAPA) will be used to inform decisions about compliance with regulatory requirements. Where the registered provider fails to meet the statutory requirements an escalation process may be commenced.

The inspectorate reserves the right to edit responses received for reasons including clarity, completeness and compliance with administrative and legal processes.

The contents of the report are compiled by the inspectorate body.

Acknowledgments

The inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider 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*
- (c) there is a clear management structure in the service that identifies the lines of authority and accountability in the service and the specific roles and responsibilities of each employee and unpaid worker.*

(2) A registered provider shall ensure that each employee, unpaid worker and contractor is suitable and competent taking into consideration the nature of the needs of children, including by-

- (a) consideration of references from the person's past employers, if any, and in particular the most recent employer, if any,*
- (b) consideration of references from reputable sources in the case of a person who has no past employers,*
- (c) consideration of the vetting disclosure received from the National Vetting Bureau of the Garda Síochána in accordance with the Act of 2012 in respect of the person, and*

(d) ensuring, insofar as is practicable, that where a person has lived in a state other than the State for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months, he or she provides police vetting from the police authorities in that state.

(4) A registered provider shall ensure that, without prejudice to the generality of paragraph (2) and subject to paragraphs (5) and (6), each employee working directly with children attending the service holds at least a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 on the National Qualifications Framework or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

Compliance Information

- (1)
- (a) The registered provider was the person in charge of the service and the named person.
 - (b) During the inspection, the registered provider was present in the service.
 - (c) There was a clear management structure in the service that identified the roles and responsibilities of the registered provider and the named emergency person.
- (2) The file of the registered provider and the named emergency person were reviewed.
- (a) One of the references available were from a past employer and were validated.
 - (b) Three of the references available were from a reputable source and were validated.
 - (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for the registered provider and the named emergency person. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
 - (d) Police vetting was not required for the registered provider or the named emergency person as they did not live outside of a state for longer than six consecutive months.
- (4) The registered provider working directly with the children held a relevant qualification in Early Childhood Care and Education at level 9.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 11 - Staffing levels

(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)-

(c) a registered provider of a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that, where the person in charge operates the service single-handedly, a second person familiar with the operation of the service and in a position to provide assistance to the person in charge in operating the service is, at all times, within close distance of the service and available to attend the service to assist the person in charge in the event of an emergency.

Compliance Information

(3) In the morning session, there were 11 children aged between 3 and 4 years being cared for by the registered provider. In the afternoon session, there were 9 children aged between 3 and 4 years being cared for by the registered provider. The minimum adult to child ratios were maintained for the duration of the inspection.

(8)

(c) The registered provider ensured that a second person familiar with the service was in a position to provide assistance and was available to attend the service in the event of an emergency occurring.

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

(1) A sample of 12 children's records were available and contained the relevant information required as outlined from (a) to (i).

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 19 - Health, welfare and development of child

- (1) A registered provider shall, in providing a pre-school service, ensure that-*
- (a) each child's learning, development and well-being is facilitated within the daily life of the pre-school service through the provision of the appropriate activities, interaction, materials and equipment, having regard to the age and stage of development of the child, and*

Compliance Information

(1) (a)

Basic needs

- Individual care plans were available for children who required them. It was observed the registered provider used Lamh sign language with children who used this as a method of communication. It was observed that the environment promoted inclusiveness, and the registered provider stated the importance of this for the children.
- The children were observed freely moving around the care room and outdoor area.
- All children had an opportunity to spend time outdoors and were observed to enjoy their time in the area.
- Individual water bottles were available to the children and were stored on a child height shelf.
- The children's lunches were provided by the parents and guardians. Lunches contained meat sandwiches, cheese, crackers, yogurt, fruit and water.

- The registered provider supported children with toileting when needed and was observed to be respectful in their interactions with the children.

Supporting relationships

- There was a family wall on display in the care room which supported the children's sense of identity and belonging.
- Some children had started their preschool journey in the service in the past week and the children who were familiar with the service supported them in finding their way around the room and learning the routine of the day.
- The registered provider was attuned to the children's needs and listened to each child's voice.
- The children were supported in regulating their emotions. This was observed when a child got upset and breathing techniques were used to support the child.
- The registered provider was at the child's level at all times when communicating with them. They sat with the children at snack time and gave children the time to enjoy their food. The registered provider stated that mealtime allows children to sit and talk to the other children, which develops the children's social skills.
- Transitions were made easier for children through the registered provider making children aware of when they would be moving on to the next activity by using verbal cues.
- The registered provider was observed communicating with the parents and guardians of the children at collection time. The service will begin using an electronic application to communicate activities and photographs with the children's families in the coming week.

Programme of activities

- The children were observed partaking in various activities throughout the day. Children were observed playing with the Montessori equipment which supported gross motor and cognitive skills.
- The children put on waterproof aprons and played with water using containers to fill and pour water from.
- The children played with jigsaws and worked together to complete the jigsaw.
- The children were observed singing songs which promoted physical movement and communication.
- The children read books in the reading area on the soft seating.
- The children were observed using the climbing frames and swing in the outdoor area.
- The children played in the outdoor classroom with the kitchen, trains and animals.
- The children were observed checking on the plants that were growing. A pumpkin and tomatoes were growing, and the children were aware of how to care for the plants.

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:

- The main entrance to the service was secured on arrival to the service. This prevented any child from exiting the service unsupervised and any unauthorised access to the service.
- The outdoor area was secured with a fence and a gate. The gate was observed to be secured during the inspection.
- Blind cords were observed to be secured during the inspection.
- All toys and equipment observed was in good condition on inspection.
- Cleaning agents were stored out of reach to the children on inspection.
- Waste was stored in an area that was not accessible to children.
- Medication was stored in its original container and was clearly labelled.

Infection Control:

- The children were observed washing their hands after outdoor play and before snack. Warm water, paper towel and soap were available to the children in the sanitary and care room hand washing basins. Water temperatures were recorded between 35.1°C and 38.3°C which allowed for effective hand washing.
- The children's lunches were stored in a refrigerator to prevent perishable foods from spoiling.

Fire Safety:

- The fire exits were observed to be clear and free from obstruction.

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

(b) a daily record in writing is kept of the entry on the premises of any such person.

Compliance Information

(1) The registered provider ensured that each child was checked in and out of the service daily.

(3)

(a) The inspector was requested to check in and out of the service on arrival and departure.

(b) There was a daily record kept in the service of the entry of any such person to the service.

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) The registered provider held an in-date certificate in First Aid Responder (FAR) training and was in the premises at all times while the service was in operation.

(2)

(a) There was a fully stocked first aid box in the care room and outdoor area and the registered provider was aware of its location if needed.

(b) The first aid box was stored out of reach to the children and was available at all times if needed.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The registered provider ensured that the service was adequately insured. The insurance policy commenced on 28 March 2025 and expired on 27 March 2026.