

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

<b>TUSLA Identifier:</b>	TU2016LH002
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<b>Name of Service:</b>	Rachael's Room
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<b>Address of Service:</b>	Shelagh, Hackballscross, Dundalk, Co. Louth
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<b>Eircode:</b>	A91 Y744
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<b>Name of Registered Provider:</b>	Rachael Conlon
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<b>Service type:</b>	Part Time, Sessional
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<b>Date(s) of Inspection:</b>	13/11/2025
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<b>No of pre-school children:</b>	AM	21	PM	7
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<b>Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:</b>	Early Years Inspectorate Child Wellbeing Centre, Castleblayney Co. Monaghan
<b>Inspection undertaken by:</b>	M.Flood
<b>Title:</b>	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).

<b>Conditions if applicable</b>	Not Applicable
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### Description of service

Rachael's Room has been operating in its current location since May 2016. The service operates from 09:15 - 14:15 Monday to Friday offering part time and sessional care and education to preschool children aged 2½ - 6 years. The service is registered to cater for a maximum of twenty-two preschool children.

The service operates from a separate single storey modular building on the grounds of Scoil Bhríde National School since September 2024. The premises consists of a specifically developed playroom, a kitchenette, storage area and adjoining sanitary facilities. An enclosed outdoor area is located to the front and side of the premises.

### Staffing

The service employs 5 childcare staff including the registered provider who work directly with the pre-school children attending 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.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 16

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 would like to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, person in charge, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

## Part II - Registration and Register

### Regulation 8 - Notification of change in circumstances

*(1) A registered provider of a pre-school service other than a temporary pre-school service shall, subject to paragraph (3), notify the Agency in writing of any proposed change in the details in relation to the pre-school service contained in the register pursuant to section 58C(2) of the Act or Regulation 7(2) at least 60 days before it is proposed that the change would take effect.*

### Non-Compliance Information

- (1) The registered provider did not notify the Inspectorate of a change in the type of service being offered. Following a review of documentation available during the inspection and a discussion with staff it was confirmed to the inspector that up to 8 preschool children attend the service on a full day care basis i.e. greater than 5 hours. This was also confirmed by the registered provider. This service is registered to operate as a part-time service.

### Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

#### Corrective and Preventive Action

A change of circumstances application to change from part time care to full day care and a fit for purpose inspection has taken place. Further information was received by phone from the registered provider who gave assurances that any future changes will be notified to the agency prior to the change taking place.

#### Supporting documentation submitted

Change in circumstance application

### Summary Comment

Following a referral to the national registration office, the registered provider submitted the required change in circumstances application and commenced the process to amend their registration status in accordance with their current operation.

## 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) & (b) The service had a designated person in charge who is also the registered provider and a named person to deputise as required. The deputy person in charge was on the premises when the inspector arrived unannounced to the service. The registered provider arrived on the premises at 12:00 midday

(c) When questioned the staff present were familiar with the management structure within the service.

(2) Five files were presented for inspection which included the registered provider and 4 childcare staff.

The following were reviewed:

(a)&(b)

There were 2 written and validated references from a past employer or an alternative source available for all 5 adults.

(c) Documentary evidence of a processed Garda vetting disclosure was available for all 5 adults. However, the registered provider did not adhere to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years. This is outlined under Regulation 23.

(d) Following a review of the files presented on the day of inspection international police vetting was not required at this time.

(4) Documentary evidence was available to show that the registered provider and 4 staff members who work directly with the preschool children had at least the minimum required level 5 childcare qualification.

### 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 there was an adequate number of staff members working directly with the children attending the service.

(2) The adult to child ratios were correct in the service when the inspector arrived unannounced at 10:55 and remained so throughout the inspection. The following was observed:

- There were 21 preschool children aged 2 years 7 months - 4 years attending the service with 3 staff members.

The registered provider arrived in the service at 12 midday approximately and was present until 13:45.

(8)(a) Following a review of the staff rota and a discussion with staff, this demonstrated that the registered provider ensured that there were always 2 staff on the premises.

## 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:

*(a) the name, position, qualifications and experience of the person in charge and of every other employee, unpaid worker and contractor;*

*(g) the policies, procedures and statements the service is required to maintain in accordance with Regulation 10;*

*(h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis;*

*(i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;*

*(j) details of any medication administered to a pre-school child attending the service with signed parental consent;*

*(k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.*

### Compliance Information

- (1)
- (a) Documentary evidence was on display in the service containing the names, qualifications and experience of all staff present. In addition, curriculum vitae were available in the staff files presented for inspection.
- (g) The policies and procedures for the service were available for inspection.
- (i) Documentary evidence was available of a weekly staff roster which was reflective of the staff present in the service. Break times were also documented.
- (j) No medication was administered during the inspection. Documentary evidence was available of signed parental consent for the administration of emergency medication including temperature reducing medication in accordance with the services policy.
- (k) A sample of 5 accident and incident records for the previous 3 months were reviewed. The forms were complete and contained the required information e.g. parent signatures indicating that they had been informed about the incident and the staff and managers signatures indicating that they had discussed and reviewed the incidents.

### Non-Compliance Information

- (h) When the inspector reviewed the children's attendance records at 11:05 none of the arrival times for the 21 preschool children in attendance had been documented.

### Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

#### **Corrective and Preventive Action**

Manager will sign off that staff member greeting children signs children in as they arrive and leave the service daily. This will be checked twice daily to ensure it is completed correctly. Staff have been given refresher training in signing children in and out.

#### **Supporting documentation submitted**

Sign in and sign out sheet template

### Summary Comment

The registered provider submitted details of the corrective and preventative actions taken in the service to address the non-compliance. Based on the information submitted the non-compliance identified under Regulation 16 has been adequately addressed. This will be reviewed at the next inspection.

### 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

(b) appropriate and suitable care practices are in place in the pre-school service, having regard to the number of children attending the service and the nature of their needs.

#### Compliance Information

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

##### Basic needs:

- The children were observed to move freely in the care room. All children had a change of environment to the outdoor area and were dressed appropriately for going outside.
- The toilet trained children were encouraged to be independent with toileting. Discrete supervision was provided.
- Snack time was observed to be a social, interactive occasion with the children seated at the tables and the staff present providing assistance if they required it. During this time the children and staff were observed to chat about their lunches and what they all liked. Children who required extra time to sit and eat their lunch were facilitated to do so.
- Some of the children were observed to access the couch after snack time to sit and read a book.

##### Supporting Relationships

- Soft tones, positive and respectful language were observed in interactions between the children and staff present. The staff were supportive and responsive in promoting positive behaviours for example: *good girl...thank you for helping. Good listening boys and girls...*
- Communication with parents was mainly at drop of and collection times. Email and phone calls are also reported as being used when required. The staff confirmed that photographs, 'learning stories' and additional information are shared through a small media messaging service. Scrap books are in development for each child in the service and are a collation of the child's learning and experiences in the service. These are sent home as a 'keepsake' at the end of the year.

- The staff when questioned were familiar with the Individual plans for children who required additional supports in the service. The staff were able to provide the inspector with information relating to strategies that are currently in use to support children to attend the service. In addition, there was evidence that strategies from multidisciplinary teams were also being provided.

### 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 19 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.

(2) A registered provider-

(a) of a full day care service, a part-time day care service, a sessional preschool service or a childminding service that is registered for the first time on or after 30 June 2016, or

(b) of a full day care service, a part-time day care service, a sessional preschool service or a childminding service that moves premises on or after 30 June 2016,

shall ensure that a suitable, safe and secure outdoor space to which the preschool children attending the service have access on a daily basis is provided on the premises.

#### Compliance Information

(1)(b)

There was a comfortable rest area within the care room that consisted of a couch that was frequently accessed by the children during the inspection to rest or to sit and read a book. Foldable floor mats were also available and stored under the couch should they be required.

(2) (a) There was an enclosed outdoor area to the front and side of the premises, which was divided into 2 areas. All areas were secured, fenced and gated. A variety of age-appropriate toys and equipment that supported all areas of development were available to the children and included the following:

**Area 1:** was located at the front entrance. This area consisted of a tarmacked surface and was partially covered for use in all weathers. There were tables and chairs available to carry out tabletop activities, a castle plastic climbing frame and slide and a large plastic tray with blocks was observed in use. The staff also detailed that sensorial

materials are also used in the large trays e.g. breakfast cereal hoops that were reported to be used as a threading activity to make bracelets.

**Area 2** was located to the side of the building and contained a variety of surfaces including stones for digging and grassy terrain. This area had a wooden boat with seats, tress stumps for sitting and balancing on, tyres for climbing through and a variety of 'bubble' cars and ride on tractors. A plastic playhouse, mud kitchen and picnic tables were also available. The children were observed to access this area in the afternoon.

### 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

All snacks and lunches were provided by the parents and stored appropriately in the refrigerator. The children were observed to eat a variety of fresh fruit, cut up into age-appropriate pieces as per safety guidelines, sandwiches, wraps, rolls, yoghurts, and cheese. The children had access to their drink bottles and cups of fresh drinking water when they requested it.

#### Non-Compliance Information

The children attending the service for more than 5 hours did not have a hot meal provided in accordance with best practice nutritional guidelines.

#### Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

##### Corrective and Preventive Action

Any children who attend more than 5 hours will be offered a hot meal

Hot Lunches will be provided for children attending more than 5 hours and menu has been emailed to parents

##### Supporting documentation submitted

Copy of email sent to parents.

Copy of sample menu

Email evidence of registration with the environmental health department

#### Summary Comment

The registered provider submitted details of the corrective and preventative actions taken in the service to address the non-compliance. Based on the information submitted the non-compliance identified under Regulation 22 has been adequately addressed. Implementation and sustainment of this will be reviewed 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

It was observed that the registered provider has taken the following measures to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of the pre-school children attending the service including:

##### General Safety

- The external and internal doors were appropriately secured to prevent the children from exiting unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the Early Years' service.
- The designated emergency exit doors were clear and unobstructed.
- The outdoor play area was gated and secured with fencing to prevent a child gaining unsupervised access to a roadway or other source of danger. Foam padding had also been placed on the wooden posts to protect the children from impact hazards.

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##### Safe Sleep:

- No child was observed to sleep during the inspection.

##### Fire Safety:

- Documentary evidence was available of up-to-date monthly fire drills that had been carried out in the service. This is accordance with best practice safety guidelines.

#### 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:

##### General Safety:

1. The registered provider did not adhere to the re-vetting timeframes for 1 staff member as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
2. There was no safety impact surface underneath the castle climbing frame and slide in the outdoor area. This is a potential injury risk.
3. A pest control box which was tied on to the low-level sink in both toilets was accessible to the preschool children and is a potential safety risk.

4. A phone charger with lead was observed plugged into the electrical wall socket at a low level in the playroom and was therefore accessible to the preschool children.
5. There was no documentary evidence of risk assessments having been carried out in the service when documentation was requested by the inspector.

### Infection Control:

The following infection control risks were observed during the inspection:

6. There was no running hot water in the staff toilet and in one of the preschool toilets when checked by the inspector at 11:55 and again at 13:40, which were both observed in use. It is acknowledged that one of the preschool toilets did have a constant supply of thermostatically controlled hot water.
7. There was inadequate handwashing in the service. The children's hands were not observed being washed prior to snack time or after coming in from outdoor play.
8. Facilities for hand drying were inadequate as a brown cloth towel was observed hanging on the toilet door and used by the preschool children to dry hands. Additionally, at this time there were no single use paper towels available for use in the sanitary area until they were restocked by the registered provider after her arrival to the premises.

### Administration of Medication:

9. Temperature reducing medication was not administered in accordance with the services Administration of Medication Policy; for example, at 12:00 one child was reported feeling unwell and the staff member identified that the child had a raised temperature of 38.9 °C. No temperature reducing medication was administered by the staff present in the service while they were awaiting a parent to collect the child, even though the children's records reviewed indicated that parents had given signed consent to administer this medication in emergency. The child was collected at 12:45. This is at variance with the services policy that states *"temperature reducing medication is administered when the temperature exceeds 38 °C.*

### Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

#### Corrective & Preventive Actions

1. The garda vetting has been returned since and is on file. The manager will keep a closer check on garda Vetting to ensure it doesn't lapse.
2. The climbing castle has been moved onto a grass area, which is acceptable under manufacturers requirements.

Castle will be kept on grass area for future

3. We use Pest control service in order to ensure the best health and safety of the children. Our pest control company were contacted and returned and placed the locked bait boxes in a more suitable location. Pest control boxes are checked they are put of reach of children each morning and are listed on the risk assessment.
4. All cables are kept out of reach of children Risk assessment will be carried out each morning, so no cables are in reach of children.
5. Risk assessment will be carried out each morning. Although risk assessments are carried out daily by staff a new written record is kept and available for inspections.
6. Sign to remind staff to turn on hot water and it is also listed on daily risk assessment. remind staff to turn on hot water.
7. Children always wash hands before snacks and outside. Staff have received refresher training in infection control policy.
8. Paper hand towels are available and will be refilled as soon as empty. Towels available for spills are kept out of reach of children.
9. Staff have been reminded of our infection control policy and children with a high temperature are given anti febrile medication. Staff received refresher training in relation to our infection control policy and children with a high temperature are given medication in accordance with the policy.

### **Supporting documentation submitted**

- A copy of updated Garda vetting.
- Photographic evidence
- Updated daily risk assessment documents
- Reminder sign to turn on hot water.
- Hand hygiene policy
- Infection control policy

### **Summary Comment**

The registered provider submitted details of the corrective and preventative actions taken in the service to address the non-compliances. Based on the information submitted the non-compliances identified under Regulation 23 have been adequately addressed. Implementation and sustainment of the actions detailed will be reviewed at the next inspection.

### Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

#### Regulation 29 - Premises

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

- (d) cleaned, maintained and repaired, as required, and*
- (e) equipped with adequate and suitable sanitary facilities.*

#### Non-Compliance Information

- (d)
1. A large amount of equipment and toys were observed to be stored in the staff toilet e.g. toys, paper towels, outdoor clothes and mops and bucket. This does not provide for the hygienic storage of toys and equipment.
  2. In one of the children's toilets the cover of the ceiling mounted ventilation fan was covered in a thick layer of dirt and dust.

#### Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

##### Corrective and Preventive Action

Storage unit for wellies is no longer in staff toilet, and the toys have been removed.

Toilets will be checked daily to ensure they are not used for storage and no toys are there.

Fan was cleaned immediately after inspection. Fan is listed on toilet cleaning sheet to ensure it is not forgotten about.

##### Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence.

#### Summary Comment

The registered provider submitted details of the corrective and preventative actions taken in the service to address the non-compliances. Based on the information submitted the non-compliance identified under Regulation 29 have been adequately addressed.