

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2016LH002
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Name of Service:	Rachael's Room
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Address of Service:	Shelagh, Hackballscross, Dundalk, Co. Louth
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Eircode:	A91 Y744
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Name of Registered Provider:	Rachael Conlon
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Service type:	Part Time, Sessional
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Date(s) of Inspection:	08/12/2023
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No of pre-school children:	AM	18	PM	No.
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate Child Wellbeing Centre, Castleblayney Co. Monaghan
Inspection undertaken by:	M. Flood
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	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 2-6 years. The service is currently registered to cater for a maximum of twenty-two preschool children.

This service operates from a purposively developed classroom within Scoil Bhríde National School in Hackballscross, Co. Louth. The premises consists of a spacious playroom with separate sanitary facilities and access to an outdoor play area directly off the playroom.

Staffing

The registered provider and three additional staff members are employed work directly with the preschool children.

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 9,11,19, 25 and 26; however, on inspection additional non-compliance which posed a risk was identified under Regulation 29. 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.

Acknowledgments

The inspector would like 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

(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 and named deputy person to deputise as required. The deputy person was on the premises when the inspector arrived unannounced to the service. The person in charge who is also the registered provider arrived on the premises at 11:00 and both were present for the remainder of the inspection.

(2) Five staff files were presented for inspection and reviewed:

(a) & (b) There were 2 written and validated references from a past employer or an alternative source available for each of the 5 members of staff which included the registered provider.

(c) Documentary evidence of a processed Garda vetting disclosure was available for each member of staff employed in the service.

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

(4) Documentary evidence was available to demonstrate that each member of staff, who works directly with the pre-school children held at least the minimum required level 5 on the National Framework of Childcare 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.

(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) During the inspection there were an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the service.

(2) On the day of inspection when the inspector arrived at the service at 10:30 there were two adults working directly with the 18 preschool children in attendance. All children present on the day of inspection were attending the service on a sessional basis. The registered provider arrived on the premises at 11:00 and was present for the remainder of the inspection.

(8)(a) Following a review of the available documentation e.g., staff rotas and children's attendance records this information demonstrated that the registered provider ensured 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

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

Basic Needs:

- The children were observed to move freely in the care room and were also offered a choice to have a change of environment into the outdoor area. All children who accessed the outdoor area were dressed appropriately to go outside.
- The children's care needs were attended to on a regular basis for example, hands were washed before snack times, after messy play and noses were cleaned throughout the day.
- Healthy eating was promoted in the service as was evident by the snacks which were provided by the children's parents/ guardians.
- The children were encouraged to be independent with toileting and discreet supervision was also provided by staff when accessing the sanitary area. Gentle handwashing reminders were also given to the children after toileting.
- The children were observed to independently access the soft area to take a break and to read a book with their friends.
- The staff working with the children were sensitive and responsive in promoting positive behaviours and were observed to support the children to find positive solutions when they experienced challenge in sharing play equipment e.g., positive language, redirection to another activity or toy.

Supporting Relationships

- Soft tones, positive and respectful language were observed in interactions between the staff and children in the playroom. The staff were observed sitting at the tables or on the couch with the children and were observed to interact with the children in a warm and supportive manner. Positive language and encouragement that promoted self-esteem and independence for the children was also used by staff e.g.

during an art activity the staff member stated “...a lovely card for your mammy...a lovely butterfly ...well done.”.

- A key worker system was in place in the service with named staff members assigned responsibility for developing close relationships with a designated group of children and their parents.
- The staff informed the inspector that most communication with parents is carried out through an electronic interlinked application set up between the service and the parents. Information pertaining to the children’s care needs, activities, learning stories and photographs are shared with parents through this method. For example, one child requested a staff member to send a photograph of them as a “one..eyed pirate” to their parents. This was facilitated by the staff member who responded to the child stating “...I will send that to mum now”. Social media is also used to enhance communication between the service and home. The staff reported that informal discussions also take place at drop off and collection times.

Physical and Material Environment

- A variety of age-appropriate materials and equipment were available in the playroom that support many areas of development such as fine motor skills, role play, speech and language and sensory development. Toys and equipment were positioned on open low-level shelving in all rooms which promoted independence and facilitated choice for the children.
- The playroom had clearly defined interest areas and the environments supported the pre-school children in initiating and sustaining play activities with a variety of toys and materials. An adequately resourced kitchen area with supportive equipment, dolls and associated equipment, construction area, dress up and role play, activity tables containing sand and water, small world toys, arts and crafts materials and toys to develop manipulation skills including bricks, blocks, jigsaws, shape sorters, were amongst the interest areas and play equipment provided in the care room. The outdoor area also had a variety of equipment including, trees stumps for sitting or stepping on, a sand pit, blackboards, wheelbarrows and a wooden boat to support all areas of development.

Programme of Activities

- A variety of the children’s art activities on display in the playroom and stored in each child’s “cubby hole” were also available to take home. These included Happy Christmas pictures, painted Christmas tree plates, winter themed painted snow pictures.

- The children were observed to engage in a variety of activities that promoted many areas of development including; sensory play, role play, art activities, singing songs and reading stories, outdoor play, and art activities.
- Activities were child led and the children were provided with choice in relation to their engagement in activities and in accessing play equipment throughout the session e.g., “would you like to go outside or play inside?”. This was further demonstrated by the visual routines on display and the “voice of the child” comments which were reported by staff to inform curriculum planning in 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)(a) A record was maintained of the monthly fire drills which had been completed in the service.

(b) A record was kept of the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises. Firefighting equipment was last serviced on 01/2023 and the smoke alarms on 09/2023.

(4) Notices of the procedures to be followed in the event of an emergency was displayed in 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 fire fighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises.

(2) The record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection by-

(a) a parent or guardian of a pre-school child attending or proposing to attend the pre-school service,

(b) an employee, and

(c) an authorised person.

(3) A registered provider shall ensure that a record referred to in paragraph (2) is retained for a period of 5 years after its creation

(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) A record was maintained of all fire drills which had been completed in the service, the last recorded being 17/11/2023.

(b) A record was kept of the number, type and maintenance of the fire-fighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises which were dated 17/01/2023 and 22/09/23 respectively.

(4) Notices of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire were conspicuously displayed on the premises

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

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

(c) kept adequately lit, heated and ventilated

Non-Compliance Information

The sanitary facilities accessed by the preschool children felt cold and the recorded ambient temperature at 11:35 was 13.6°C. This temperature is below the required room temperature of 18 - 22°C.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Actions

The broken radiator in the bathroom has been fixed. The temperature is checked each morning, and a heater is put in the bathroom in the morning before children arrive if the temperature needs to be boosted to over 18°C.

Supporting documentation submitted

- Documentary evidence of a daily risk assessment document including the bathroom room temperature.

Summary Comment

The registered provider submitted details of the corrective and preventative actions taken in the service to address the non-compliance. Based on this information the non-compliance in relation to Regulation 29 has been addressed.