

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier: TU2019MO001

Name of Service: Ros Na Réaltóg

Address of Service: Ross West, Crimlin, Castlebar, Co. Mayo

Eircode: F23 V008

Name of Registered Provider: Róisín Geddes

Service type: Sessional

Date of Inspection: 18/09/2024

No of pre-school children:	AM	15	PM	-
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Year's Inspectorate, TUSLA, Child and Family Agency, 2nd Floor, St. Mary's HQ., Castlebar, Co. Mayo
Inspection undertaken by:	M Farrell and L Costello
Title:	Early Years Inspectors

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

Ros Na Réaltóg is a privately owned and operated outdoor forest pre-school. The service is registered to provide sessional services for children aged between two to six years of age from 09.00hours-12.00hours. The service is based at a primary school in a rural area near Castlebar, Co Mayo. There is a large, well- developed, enclosed, green outdoor space with polytunnel shelter to the side of the premises, sanitary facilities and one playroom that is located in the primary school.

Staffing

There are four staff members including the registered provider who work directly with 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. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under sections of regulations 9, 11, 16, 19, 23 and 27.

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 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

(2)

It was confirmed through discussion with the registered provider and review of documentation that there were two new adults in the service since the last focused inspection on the 16 November 2023. The vetting documentation for the remaining two staff members had been reviewed and accepted as meeting regulatory requirements on previous inspection. The following vetting documentation and qualifications were available on file for the two new staff members:

- (a) Two written validated references from past employers particularly the most recent employer for one staff member.
- (b) One written validated reference from a source other than a past employer for one staff member.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all four staff including the two new staff members. The service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting for staff members every three years.

(4)

All four staff members held the required qualifications in Early Childhood Care and Education or equivalent.

Non-Compliance Information

(2)

The following documents were unavailable for inspection:

- (b) A second written validated reference was required for one staff member.
- (d) An international child protection certificate was required for one staff member new to the service.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The registered provider advised in a written response that:

(2)

Corrective and Preventive Action

- (b) A reference was requested from a different work placement and evidence was sent to the inspectorate. References will be verified for staff from appropriate sources.
- (d) Staff will check staff vetting to confirm if they have worked abroad and obtain international police vetting if required. staff will check that the vetting is with the relevant international body if the person has worked abroad.

Supporting documentation submitted

Copies of a reference and international child protection certificate.

Summary Comment

The actions taken and evidence submitted by the registered provider has satisfactorily addressed the non-compliance found on inspection under this regulation.

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.*

Compliance Information

- (1) An adequate number of adults worked directly with the children attending the service. There were 3 adults working directly with 14 children on the inspectors' unannounced arrival to the service on the morning of the inspection. A further child arrived later to the service bringing the total number of children to 15.
- (3) The minimum ratio for a sessional service of one adult to each eleven children was adhered to with 3 adults working directly with 15 children during the inspection.

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:*
- (h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis;*
 - (i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;*
- (3) A record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection on the premises, and the documents and records referred to in paragraph (2)(a) shall be open to inspection whether on the premises or elsewhere, by an authorised person.*

Compliance Information

- (1)
- (h) Accurate daily attendance records containing the time of the children’s arrival to and departure from the service were observed in a sample of records reviewed.
 - (i) The staff kept a record of daily staff rosters.
- (3) The registered provider made the written records available to the inspectors in request in the service.

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)
- The staff arranged activities in the service to suit children’s needs depending on their age and developmental stage. The service is an outdoor forest school located on the grounds of a rural primary school. During the inspection the children played outdoors in a large, grassed woodland space with different play areas that had been named by children. These included the “Gruffalo cave” in a large rosehip bush and the “Giant’s chair” which was a large wooden chair that could be used for circle times/story time. A group of children played under trees in the “piggy island boat area” where recycled tyres had been used to form a boat structure in the ground. A recent addition was a wooden bridge known as the “forest bridge” that supported the development of children’s gross motor skills where staff were observed to supervise children climbing. There was a wide variety of easily accessible play equipment and activities set up for children to chose where they wanted to play. Staff set up a water table with water and plastic play items and a child wearing wet gear to protect their clothing played happily at it. Later in the session a staff member placed paper and paint at another table for the children to paint outdoors. Children also played at a farm themed activity table with a tractor, miniature farm animals, grass, small branches and leaves. The children moved freely around the outdoor space choosing where they wanted to play. There was a tarmac area beside the school building with ride on toys that the children used to play on. A balance rope area in the trees and low-level mud slide on the ground provided

further physical activity play opportunities using the natural environment. The children had access to other toys in a polytunnel and a group were observed to play shop selling “ice-cream” at a table with a wooden till and paper money.

An emphasis was placed on learning about nature and growing produce in the service with lemon balm, rosemary and thyme growing in the polytunnel. One child excitedly told and showed the staff that they had found a potato growing in the polytunnel during the inspection. The staff told the inspectors about plans for a “no dig gardening” area in a section of ground outdoors using cardboard, mulch and soil to grow potatoes, onions and garlic.

A wooden shelter provided beside the playroom was used to store the children’s personal belongings. A photograph of each child was in place over their allocated storage space in the shelter. The playroom located in the school was not used by children on the day of the inspection. The playroom had a rest area with soft furnishings beside a book area with a large supply of age-appropriate books. Additional toys and play equipment such as tabletop activities were available in the playroom. The staff had made a large family wall in the playroom with photographs of children and their families providing a connection between the service and home for the children.

The parents provided the children’s food for lunchtime and this included sandwiches with a variety of fillings, mixed fruit, cheese and yoghurts. The children sat on padded mats in the sunshine to have their lunch and take advantage of the nice weather. Children sat in groups and individually with staff members sitting beside them and encouraging social conversation.

The children used the toilets when they felt that they needed to. The children who could use the toilet by themselves were supported to do so with staff providing help and assistance to children who needed it. The staff members responded to children’s needs for comfort and security. Children who had recently started in the service were reassured by staff who took time to talk to them and help them settle into their surroundings. The staff were positive in their approach to children’s behaviour management and spent time listening to and observing children and allowing them to express themselves. During the session, staff prepared the children for transitions between activities for example by telling them it would soon be time for circle-time. This was held in the polytunnel where the staff and children sang songs and spoke about the days of the week.

Parents were greeted warmly at the entrance gates by staff who showed familiarity with the children and families. The staff told the inspectors that emails were used to provide service information to parents before their children started attending the service. An electronic application was used to send parents

weekly videos showing them the topics and themes that were covered with the children during the week. The staff were planning an upcoming open day for parents and grandparents to come into the service to celebrate five years since the opening of the service.

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 gates to the large enclosed outdoor area were secured when the inspectors arrived unannounced to the service preventing people from entering without permission and children from leaving the service unnoticed. The inspectors were admitted to the service by staff following the production of identification documentation. The play equipment used by the children during the inspection was suitable for their age and developmental stages. Risk assessments were carried out by staff in the service for example in relation to an area where large rosehips were growing on bushes. Controls were put in place by staff for example in relation to supervision where hazards were identified. The registered provider told the inspectors that the staff had age-appropriate conversations with children in relation to safety. The staff advised the inspectors that the service had a sun safety policy in place. This policy included information such as the application of sun cream and wearing of hats during sunny weather. The staff told the inspectors that the sun safety policy information had been given to parents. Cleaning products were stored safely and were inaccessible by children. A staff member was observed to cut up whole grapes that posed a potential choking risk that a child had brought from home for lunch.

Infection Control:

The staff reminded the children to wash their hands at times for example before eating and after using the toilet. Warm water and liquid soap wash used to wash hands with paper towels used to dry hands before being disposed of in foot pedal operated waste bins.

Staff were observed to clean mats prior to use and clean tables after messy play.

Fire Safety:

Emergency exit routes in the service including the playroom were observed to be free from obstruction during the inspection.

Non-Compliance Information

Infection Control:

The children lunches including some that contained perishable items such as yogurt were stored in an outdoor shelter and not under the required temperature of 5°C for perishable food items. The outdoor air temperature on the day was recorded at 17°C.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The registered provider advised in a written response that:

Corrective & Preventive Action

Infection Control:

The service has sent a message to parents to request they put perishable items into plastic sealable bags to store in the fridge daily. Parents were reminded of the policy regarding lunch items. The service will ensure that the policy is accurate and updated as needed.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographs and a copy of a reminder message sent to parents electronically.

Summary Comment

The inspectorate has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 23 has been adequately addressed.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 27 – Supervision

A registered provider shall ensure that pre-school children attending the service are supervised at all times.

Compliance Information

The service was an outdoor forest school, and the children spent the session outdoors apart from circle time held inside a polytunnel where some children also chose to play with toys at different times. The staff positioned themselves strategically in the outdoor space to allow supervision of the children by sight. Children were supervised by staff standing beside them when climbing on top of a large wooden train. Some children were out of sight but remained within earshot of the adults when using the toilet independently. The staff undertook frequent checks of number of children. Staff linked with each other regularly and moved around supervising different areas at different times. The day was sunny and most of the children ate their lunch outdoors with some children choosing to sit at a table in the polytunnel to eat. The staff were observed to sit with the children and supervise them closely at mealtime whilst chatting with them.