

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

<b>TUSLA Identifier:</b>	TU2024DL002
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<b>Name of Service:</b>	Raphoe Community Playgroup Co Ltd
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<b>Address of Service:</b>	The Suile Centre, The Diamond, Raphoe, Lifford, Co. Donegal
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<b>Eircode:</b>	F93 TROX
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<b>Name of Registered Provider:</b>	Sarah Bradley
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<b>Service type:</b>	Sessional
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<b>Date of Inspection:</b>	10/03/2025
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<b>No of pre-school children:</b>	AM	21	PM	-
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<b>Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:</b>	Donegal Early Years Inspectorate, St. Conal's Campus, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal. F92 TD92
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<b>Inspection undertaken by:</b>	L. McGlynn
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<b>Title:</b>	Early Years Inspector
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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).

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

Raphoe community playgroup is a community based not for profit service located within the rural town of Raphoe in central Donegal. This is one of two services operated by the registered provider in the town. The service is registered to provide sessional care for children aged 2 to 6 years from 9.00am to 12.30pm each weekday. The service operates from the ground floor of a detached building to the rear of a community centre in the centre of the town. The building consists of one large playroom with adjacent children's sanitary accommodation.

### Staffing

There were six staff members employed to work in the service. This includes five staff working directly with the children and one office staff member. One of the staff members working with the children is employed in the service as part of an employment activation programme. The registered provider is not on the premises on a daily basis. There is a named person in charge and a named deputy in their absence.

### 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 announced and focused on the area of *governance/ health, welfare and development of child*. 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 person in charge, 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) At the time of inspection, the person in charge confirmed that there were six staff members who worked in the service. With reference to the above listed elements of Regulation 9, recruitment records of the six staff members were reviewed and the following was available:

- (a) (b) Written and validated references were on file for the six staff members from a past employer or in cases where there were no past employers, a source other than a previous employer.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all staff members. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
- (d) International police vetting was on file for two staff members who required it.

(4) Evidence of completion of a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at level 5 or above on the National Framework of Qualifications or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent was on file for five staff members who required it.

### 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) There was an adequate number of adults employed to work directly with the children.
- (3) On the day of inspection, there were three adults caring for 21 children attending the sessional service. All children were aged 2-5 years. There was one additional adult working in the room who was employed on an employment activation programme.

### 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 children enjoyed a morning snack on the day of inspection which was prepared and supplied by the service. The snack included crackers and wraps with carrot sticks, kiwi, orange, melon and apple segments. Staff informed the inspector that the service supplies the morning snack each day which includes bread/wraps/crackers and a selection of fruit and vegetables. Appropriate cutlery and crockery was given to children to select their own portions from a self-serve platter. The snack was provided on a rolling basis with children choosing when to eat. A wooden box was placed with the food for children to post their name to confirm they had eaten. The snack process promoted children's independence and self-help skills appropriate to their age and stage of development.

Children were independent in their toileting with sanitary facilities in the lobby area providing easy access to children. Staff were observed to accompany children to the lobby area and wait until the children finished so that they were on hand to provide assistance if required. All weather, outdoor clothing was available for each child in the service and children were supported to be independent in dressing themselves. Aprons were available and used for water and messy play activities.

Transitions throughout the day were managed in a timely and sensitive manner. Staff used a large sand timer as a visual aid to prepare children for the end of free play time. Children were observed to respond well to this and tidied away the toys and activities with the support of staff. It was evident from the children's behaviour that they were familiar and comfortable with the normal routine of the day. Children were given the opportunity to make choices and decisions regarding their play and staff were observed to respect children's choices and facilitate their decisions. There was ample space in the care room for the free movement of children. Children were observed in the outdoor play area on the day and on entry to the area, staff led the children in a group exercise activity. Following this, children were given freedom to explore the environment and engage in active, physical play.

Staff were observed interacting with children in a warm, caring and playful manner. Informal conversation was regularly used as a means of extending children’s learning and their engagement with an activity with staff using open ended questioning techniques. Staff were heard praising children for their behaviours, particularly when they were helpful to others, sharing resources and developing new skills. Children were observed playing together in pairs or small groups and this was uninterrupted by staff, allowing children the opportunity to develop social relationships with their peers. The service operated a key worker system whereby staff record observations on children and use these to inform their feedback to parents and plan for the individual learning needs of each child. The service uses a digital application and newsletters to update parents on children’s activities in the setting and staff spoke of daily updates both digitally and in person, during drop off and collection. It was evident that staff members worked well together with each staff members role clearly defined on the plan for the day. Staff were observed to carry out their role in a relaxed, unhurried, manner supporting children throughout each of the day’s activities.

The indoor environment was bright, welcoming and spacious with a variety of well-developed interest areas. The equipment was laid out in a manner that provided children the opportunity to move around and choose their play materials. The interest areas were spacious enough to allow small groups of children to play together and children were observed engaged in sustained play both in pairs and in small groups on the day of inspection. The equipment and materials were carefully considered with a range of plastic play materials alongside natural open-ended materials and traditional home style furniture. A range of fine motor play items was available in the room including jigsaws, shape sorters, peg boards, magnets and plastic bricks. The room also contained dress up, construction, hairdressers/beautician and baby care items to promote imaginary play. Children also had access to a range of art and junk materials promoting their creative expression and sensory play was facilitated with low level sand, water and soil tray. There was a small supply of age-appropriate books and reading materials was accessible to the children. Staff spoke of the routine of rotating resources on a regular basis to provide variety for children and allow children to explore a range of themes and topics.

The outdoor play area consisted of a secured section at the rear of the premises which was covered in natural grass ground surfacing. The area was resourced with play items such as a small slide, playhouse and picnic benches. Additional items were added to the area by staff such as a tuff tray with dinosaurs.