

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CE075
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Name of Service:	Little Acorns Pre-school
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Address of Service:	St. Tolas National School, Tullyglass Court, Tullyglass, Shannon, Co. Clare
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Eircode:	V14 Y625
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Name of Registered Provider:	Eilis Wall
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	11/05/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	15	PM	0
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Tusla Early Years Inspectorate, Quality and Regulation Directorate, Ennis Primary Care Centre, Station Road, Ennis, Co. Clare V95TY4E
Inspection undertaken by:	J Hayes
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).

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Description of service

The sessional service which first notified in 2008 is a privately run service provided from a large spacious classroom in St. Tola's National School. It caters for up to a maximum of 22 pre-school children aged between 2 and 5 years attending on a sessional basis at any one time. The service is open Monday-Fridays 09:00 - 12:00 hours.

The children have access to an enclosed outdoor play area accessed directly from the playroom and used solely by the pre-school children.

Staffing

The service is operated by the registered provider with the assistance of two adults.

On the 11 May 2026 the registered provider and two adults were present. The adults working directly with the children have qualifications in Early Childhood Care and Education. Evidence of staff engagement in continuing professional development was available on file.

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 and premises and facilities. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

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The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations:

Regulation 9-Management and recruitment (1)(a)(b)(2)(a)(b)(c)(d) and (4)

Regulation 11-Staffing levels (1) (3)

Regulation 19-Health, welfare and development of child (1)(a)

Regulation 24- Checking in and out and record of attendance (1)(3)(a)(b)

Regulation 25-First aid (1) (2)(a)(b)

Regulation 28-Insurance

Regulation 29-Premises (a)(b)(c)(d)(e)

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, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

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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)

The registered provider was the person in charge, and a person was available to deputise in their absence.

(b)

The registered provider was available during the inspection.

(2)

Three files were available in respect of the registered provider and the two adults working in the service. The findings included the following:

(a)

Three written and validated references from past employers in respect of adults working in the service were available.

(b)

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Three written and validated references from a source other than a past employer were available in respect of adults working in the service

(c)

Garda vetting disclosures were available in respect of the adults employed by the service. The service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d)

International police vetting was not required as the adults working in the service had not lived in another state for a period longer than six months

(4)

The adults working directly with the children held Early Childhood Care and Education qualifications ranging from Level 8 to Level 9 on the National Framework of 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.

(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)

During the inspection an adequate number of adults worked directly with the children in attendance.

(3)

On the 11 May 2026 the ratio of adults caring for children was maintained. Three adults cared for the fifteen children in attendance.

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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's learning, development and well-being was facilitated within the service through the provision of appropriate activities, interactions, materials, and equipment having regard to the age and developmental stage of the children.

Basic Needs

The healthy eating policy of the service was available, which supported children and parents to choose healthy foods. Drinking water was available throughout the day if a child was thirsty and needed a drink.

The children toileted independently, with assistance given to those who needed it. Children were encouraged to wash their hands at appropriate times during the day, such as after toileting and outdoor play and before eating. Hand washing was facilitated in the sanitary accommodation area accessed directly from the pre-school room.

The children could rest and relax as desired in the designated sensory/ library/quiet area in the service.

The children enjoyed freedom of movement within the playroom, and play activities were child led for the most part.

Outdoor play was supported and encouraged, and suitable clothing was available for children to play outdoors in poor weather conditions. Children transitioned from the indoor to the outdoor environment in accordance with their preferences and engaged in challenging and enriching activities.

The adults modelled positive behaviour for the children and the children were praised for their good behaviour.

Supporting relationships around children:

Staff were observed to be kind, caring and patient in all their interactions with the children. Each child was treated as an individual and had their likes, abilities and natural tendencies understood and respected. Children could form and maintain secure relationships with the adults through the use of the key person system.

Staff were observed to be interested in the children, listened to them and spoke to them using soft tones of voice and positive language, engaging them in conversation and gave each child the opportunity to express themselves. Children's opinions were sought, and their decisions respected which reflected that they were valued.

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Photographic evidence of activities undertaken, and art portfolios were available to share with parents and helped support a sense of working in partnership with parents.

The programme of care and education was child focused, and the children were notified in advance of transitions in activities. An open-door policy for parents/guardians was in place for the service. An informal communication approach was observed during interactions with parents/guardians. The adults discuss the children's day and observations with the parent/guardians during drop off and collection times.

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)

Each pre-school child attending the service was checked in and out of the service by staff. This record was available on the daily attendance register.

(3)(a)

The person in charge ensured that no person other than the following were allowed enter the service.

(i) Pre-school child attending the service.

(ii) A person dropping or collecting such a child.

(iii) An employee.

(iv) An unpaid worker can enter the premises without his or her entry being approved by an employee.

(b)

A daily record in writing was kept of persons who entered the pre-school.

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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 three adults working in the service held a record of up to date First Aid Responder (FAR) training.

(2)(a)

A large, wall mounted, adequately stocked first aid box was readily accessible in the playroom.

(b)

Two additional portable first aid boxes were available for the outdoor area and for taking on outings which ensured that the contents were available to the children at all times.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

Up to date insurance cover was available for twenty-two children attending on a sessional basis. The policy was valid until 27 March 2027.

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Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

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

- (a) of sound and stable structure,*
- (b) safe and secure,*
- (c) kept adequately lit, heated and ventilated*
- (d) cleaned, maintained and repaired, as required, and*
- (e) equipped with adequate and suitable sanitary facilities.*

Compliance Information

The registered provider ensured the following:

- (a) The premises was of sound structure and there were no visible defects.
- (b) The entrance was secured to prevent children from exiting and to prevent unauthorised access. The outdoor area was fenced with a secure gate to restrict entry and exit.
- (c) Heating, ventilation and lighting were adequate in the main playroom and the sanitary accommodation.
- (d) All areas were clean and well maintained.
- (e) The children had access to sanitary facilities adjacent to the playroom. The sanitary facilities were appropriately equipped with two child sized toilets and two wash hand basins. Hygienic hand washing and hand drying facilities were available. All waste was managed appropriately.