

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CE075		
Name of Service:	Little Acorns Pre-school		
Address of Service:	St. Tola's National School, Tullyglass Court, Shannon, Co. Clare		
Eircode:	V14Y625		
Name of Registered Provider:	Eilis Wall		
Service type:	Sessional		
Date of Inspection:	13/06/2023		
No of pre-school children:	AM	16	PM 6
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Quality and Regulation Directorate, Tusla, Ennis Primary Care Centre, Station Road, Ennis, Co. Clare V95TY4E		
Inspection undertaken by:	M Ní Nialláin		
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

This service was first registered and opened in 2008. The sessional service is a privately run service and is provided from a classroom in St. Tola's National School. It caters for up to a maximum of 20 pre-school children on a sessional basis at any one time, between 2 and 5 years of age. The service is open Monday-Fridays 09:00 - 12:00 hours and 12:30 – 15:30 hours. The children have access to an outdoor area on the premises.

Staffing

The registered provider operated the sessional service and was assisted by one adult and one student in the morning and afternoon on the day the inspection was carried out.

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 and safety. The inspections may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9,11,15,19,23,25,26 and 28.

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.

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, adults, students 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.*

(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) On the day of the inspection, the registered provider was the designated person in charge and there was a named person available who was able to deputise if required.

(b) During the period of the inspection, the designated person in charge was present on the premises. The staff roster indicated that the designated person or her deputy were always available in the service.

(2)(a) References from past employers were available for some of the staff members.

(b) Where past employer references were not available, references from a source other than past employers were available.

(c) Vetting disclosures received from the National Vetting Bureau of the Garda

Síochána in accordance with the Act of 2012 were available for all adults and students working in the service.

(d) Not applicable as no adult had lived outside the state for a period greater than six months.

(4) Three adults working directly with children in the service held an appropriate qualification in Early Childhood Care and Education.

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.

(8) Without prejudice to paragraphs (2) to (7)-

(c) a registered provider of a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that, where the person in charge operates the service single-handedly, a second person familiar with the operation of the service and in a position to provide assistance to the person in charge in operating the service is, at all times, within close distance of the service and available to attend the service to assist the person in charge in the event of an emergency.

Compliance Information

- (1) On the morning of Inspection there were two adults and one student working with sixteen pre-school children. There were two adults and one student working with six pre-school children in the afternoon. The adult/child ratio in the service was correct.
- (3) The staff roster showed that the registered provider ensured that the minimum ratio of adults to children was adhered to in the service.
- (8) (c) Not applicable as the service was not operated single-handedly, two adults were available in the service.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 15 – Record of pre-school child

- (1) A registered provider of a pre-school service other than a pre-school service in a drop-in centre or a temporary pre-school service shall ensure that a record in writing is kept in respect of each pre-school child attending the service containing the following particulars:
- (a) the name and date of birth of the child;
 - (b) the date on which the child first attended the service;
 - (c) the date on which the child ceased to attend the service;
 - (d) the name and address of a parent or guardian of the child and a telephone number where that parent or guardian or a relative or friend of the child can be contacted during the hours of operation of the service;
 - (e) authorisation for the collection of the child;
 - (f) details of any illness, disability, allergy or special need of the child, together with all the information relevant to the provision of special care or attention;
 - (g) the name and telephone number of the child's registered medical practitioner;
 - (h) record of immunisations, if any, received by the child;
 - (i) written parental consent for appropriate medical treatment of the child in the event of an emergency.
- (3) A record in writing referred to in paragraph (1) or (2) shall be open to inspection on the premises by-
- (a) a parent or guardian of a pre-school child but only in respect of the record relating to that child,
 - (b) an employee who is authorised in that behalf by the registered provider, and
 - (c) an authorised person.

Compliance Information

- (1) Twenty two children’s records were inspected. The service maintained an adequate record for each child attending the service, in accordance with Regulation 15(1) (a) to (i).
- (3)(a) Parents/guardians had access to all information and written records relating to their own child.
 - (b) Records were available to the authorised person in the service.
 - (c) Records were open and available for inspection to the Tusla Early Years Inspector.

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

BASIC NEEDS

- The parents provided the snack food and drink for their child. The service encouraged parents to choose healthy options . On the day, children’s snacks observed consisted of filled sandwiches and rolls with yogurts, cheese and fresh fruits. Drinking water was available to the children at all times. Snack time was observed to be an enjoyable social occasion for the children.
- Children could access the toilet at any time during the session. Staff supervised children’s hand washing and provided assistance when needed.
- Good personal hygiene practices were observed. Children washed their hands before snack break and after toileting and outdoor play.
- Children had opportunities to move about freely in the playroom and outdoors for the duration of the morning and afternoon sessions.
- The adults were positive and consistent in their approach to managing children’s behaviour.

PHYSICAL & MATERIAL ENVIRONMENT

- The indoor environment was comfortable, bright, welcoming and safe and provided a good range of developmentally appropriate and challenging experiences for the children. Suitable seating was provided for children and adults.
- The range of play resources were sufficient and varied to support all areas of children’s development and interests.
- The playroom was equipped with low level tables, chairs, shelving and furnishings which were all accessible to the children. A range of interest areas were located throughout the indoor environment. Areas were accessible and suitably resourced with an appropriate supply of supporting materials and equipment.
- There was an outdoor enclosed play space adjacent to the playroom. An area within this space had a canopy cover which facilitated outdoor play in all weathers. The outdoor area was well resourced with play equipment, e.g. a wooden kitchen and accessories, a fixed activity centre with obstacle climbing board, ladder and slide, two swings, one of which was circular, a nature table with a sea theme, a blackboard with chalk, a sandpit with play accessories, rockers and a supply of mega blocks, flowers and a planted area. Outdoor tables and seating were also available.

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 service had taken the following measures to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of the children attending the service:

The entrance gate and door into the service as well as the entrance gate to the outdoor play area were secured thus preventing children from exiting the premises unsupervised and prohibiting unauthorised persons from entering the service. There were no hazards identified in the playroom or in the outdoor play area.

Infection Control:

A supply of cleaning agents was stored out of reach of children in the service.

The playroom and sanitary areas were adequately ventilated by natural forms of ventilation.

There was liquid soap at the wash hand basins to facilitate hygienic hand washing for children and adults. Paper towels were provided in the dispensers in all the sanitary areas used by the children and adults to facilitate hygienic hand drying.

Administration of Medication:

Appropriate documentation was available in the event that medication was required by a child attending the service. Medications were not administered in the service on the day of inspection.

Fire Safety:

Monthly fire drills were carried out 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) Three adults held valid First Aid Responder certificates which were valid to the February 2023, November 2023 and November 2024.

(2)(a) There was a fully equipped first aid box stored in a designated first aid storage area which was easily accessible.

(b) The first aid box was available to the children always attending the pre-school 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.*
- (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) Records are available to show that fire drills were carried out on a monthly basis.
- (b) A record of the number, type and maintenance of fire fighting equipment and smoke alarms were available on the premises with the most recent service having been completed in November 2022.
- (4) The fire evacuation procedures were displayed in conspicuous positions on the premises.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The insurance certificate for the service was available and valid to the 27th of March 2024. The required cover was available for a maximum of 22 pre-school children who could attend at any one time.