

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

<b>TUSLA Identifier:</b>	TU2015DL063		
<b>Name of Service:</b>	Little Acorns Full Day Care		
<b>Address of Service:</b>	31 Cockhill Road, Buncrana, Co. Donegal F93D853		
<b>Eircode:</b>	F93 D853		
<b>Name of Registered Provider:</b>	Jennifer Grant		
<b>Service type:</b>	Full Day, Sessional		
<b>Date(s) of Inspection:</b>	22/06/2023		
<b>No of pre-school children:</b>	AM	12	PM 10
<b>Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:</b>	Donegal Early Years Inspectorate, St. Conal's Campus, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal. F95 XK94		
<b>Inspection undertaken by:</b>	L Mc Glynn		
<b>Title:</b>	Early Years Inspector		
<b>Authority to Inspect</b>			
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		

### Description of service

Little Acorns Full Day Care is one of four privately owned early years services operated by the registered provider in Buncrana, Co. Donegal. The service is registered to accommodate pre-school children from 2 to 6 years of age on a full day care basis and operates from 8.00am-6.00pm daily. The service operates from a single storey converted domestic dwelling located on a residential street in the urban setting of Buncrana town. There are two adjoining care rooms provided in the service, located on either side of the front hallway, with wooden fencing-style barriers and gates in place to form one inter-linked space. A sleep room and a kitchenette are also provided on the premises. Outdoor play is facilitated in the fully enclosed garden located to the rear and side of the premises.

### Staffing

There was a manager and six staff members employed to work in the service. The registered provider does not work in the service 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 unannounced and focused on the area of governance/ health, welfare and development of child/ safety. The inspections may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9, 11, 16, 19, 22 and 23.

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, 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) There were seven adults working in the service at the time of the inspection. The vetting files for one adult had been reviewed on previous inspection and is not included in this inspection report. Vetting files for another adult were reviewed to determine compliance with regulation 9 (2) (4) as this was outstanding from the previous inspection.

(a) and (b) Two validated references from past employers, including the most recent employer or a source other than a past employer in cases where there was no past employment was available for three adults and one past employer reference for two adults.

(c) Vetting disclosure documentation as issued by the National Vetting Bureau of an Garda Síochána was available for five adults.

(d) International police vetting documentation was not required as none of the adults had lived outside of the State for longer than 6 months as an adult.

(4) Certification evidence of a Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) minimum Level 5 qualification in Early Childhood Care and Education or equivalent was on file for four adults.

### Non-Compliance Information

- (a) A second validated reference was required for one adult and a reference from the most recent passed employer was required for a second adult.
- (c) The vetting disclosure on file for one adult from the National Vetting Bureau of an Garda Síochána was from a previous employment in the service and had not been updated on the employees return to the service as required.
- (d) While it is acknowledged that there was evidence on file to demonstrate that two adults had participated on relevant training, confirmation by way of award certificates were not available to view.

### Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

#### **Corrective and Preventive Action**

- (a) References were obtained and validated for both adults and management will check all records.
- (c) Garda vetting was applied for. Management will apply for Garda vetting if any future staff leave employment and then return.
- (d) The staff members applied for temporary permissions to practice. Management will ask any staff to apply for temporary permission to practice if they don't have their certificate.

#### **Supporting documentation submitted**

An updated Garda vetting disclosure was submitted for one staff member and evidence of an application for eligibility to practice was submitted for a second staff member.

### Summary Comment

The response submitted by the registered provider is accepted in relation to the non-compliance identified under Regulation 9 (2) (a) and (c). The findings documented at Regulation 9 (d) remain non-compliant as the registered provider's response did not provide adequate assurance that the non-compliance had been rectified.

### 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.*

#### Compliance Information

(1) The minimum number of adults were working with the children at all times during the inspection.

(2) On the morning of inspection there were two adults caring for 12 children aged 2-3 years. In the afternoon, there were three adults caring for 10 children aged 2-3 years. The additional adult arrived to the service to cover lunch breaks for staff and remained in the service to provide assistance on an outing planned for the afternoon.

In addition to this, the manager was on site and available to support if required.

### 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:*

- (i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;*
- (j) details of any medication administered to a pre-school child attending the service with signed parental consent;*
- (k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.*

#### Compliance Information

- (i) The service maintained a weekly staff roster.
- (j) Signed parental consent for the administration of medication is provided on enrolment which includes consent for the administration of anti-febrile medication and the application of suncream. Details of medication administered is recorded by staff at the time of administration and signed by parents on collection.
- (k) The service had maintained a record of accidents or injuries involving children while attending the service.

#### Non-Compliance Information

- (k) A number of the records of accidents or incidents were not signed by parents to confirm that staff had informed them of any accident or incident involving their child.

#### Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

##### **Corrective and Preventive Action**

(k) All these records have now been signed by parents. Staff are now going to text parents when a child has an accident or has medication so they know to sign the reports when collecting their child.

##### **Supporting documentation submitted**

No evidence submitted.

#### Summary Comment

The response submitted by the registered provider is accepted as meeting the requirements of the regulation and the practice will be reviewed on the next inspection.

### 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 weather on the day of inspection was very warm and sunny therefore the children spent the majority of their time outdoors with the exception of mealtimes. Activities were arranged by staff in shaded areas to allow children to play out of direct sunlight. Although not observed by the inspector, staff stated that sunscreen was applied to all children prior to playing outdoors and was applied regularly throughout the day. Children's personal care needs were tended to promptly and staff were observed helping children to clean their face after eating. Toileting within the service was managed in a child friendly manner with older children supported to be independent in using the toilet. Staff were observed remaining within reach should a child require assistance and provided reminders to children to wash their hands. Younger children had their nappies changed regularly and staff were observed using this time to engage children in one-to-one conversation about their home and family life.

There were no children in the service who required sleep on the day and the inspector was informed that when required, sleep is provided to children in the middle of the day. Staff also stated that on occasions when children were unusually tired outside of the normal sleep time this was facilitated. As children spent most of their play time outdoors, they were observed to be engaged in physically active play throughout the day. Children were free to move between the play equipment available to them. On occasions where there were minor disputes between children over play items, this was dealt with in a positive manner by staff. The staff were observed encouraging children to be kind to their friends, take turns and share.

The staff team worked well together on the day of inspection, communicating regularly on children's care, routines and the schedule for the day. This facilitated smooth transitions for children between care and play times. The process used by staff ensured that children were not waiting for extended periods of time for their turn to hand wash, toilet or receive their food at lunch time. The service was also working on transitioning a number of children to another service owned by the registered provider. To support this,

children were brought on an outing to the service in the afternoon to meet the staff and have an opportunity to familiarise themselves with the premises.

The indoor environment in the service contained play resources that were arranged to create a number of well- defined areas of interest that supported a range of play experiences. The interest areas contained play resources that supported children’s sensory and imaginary play and facilitated choice and independence. These included a construction area, shop area, baby care items, a kitchen, library and relaxation areas, dressing up props and manipulative play items. A number of open shelving units contained items to support children’s cognitive and fine motor development such as plastic blocks, jigsaws, peg bards and shape sorters. Wall displays indoors included a family tree and the daily routine in the service in picture format. There was also a template on the wall for staff to record individual children’s interests and staff informed the inspector that they document activities they observe children to enjoy doing and try to extend this interest by planning around this interest.

The outdoor area used by the children on the day was resourced with sensory and art areas such as sand play and painting and physical play items such as ride on trikes and trucks. A mud kitchen facilitated role play opportunities and items brought out from indoors facilitated other types of play. A second large play area with a wooden playhouse was provided adjacent to the one in use on the day and was undergoing routine maintenance work therefore was not available to the children.

### Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

#### Regulation 22 – Food and drink

*A registered provider shall ensure that adequate and suitable, nutritious and varied food and drink is available for each pre-school child attending the pre-school service.*

#### Compliance Information

Childrens food was supplied from home and brought to the service each day. Children ate at regular intervals throughout the day. Drinking water was available to children in their individual bottles.

#### Non-Compliance Information

On the services last inspection dated 8 July 2022, they were found to be non-complaint under Regulation 22 as not all children attending on the day were provided with nutritionally balanced meals including a hot meal. There was also an insufficient stock of food available in the service for a child who may require additional or alternative food.

The service submitted corrective and preventative actions in response to these non-compliances stating that a letter would be sent to parents reminding them of the requirement to send in an adequate quantity of nutritious food including a hot meal with their child each day. This is at variance with what was observed on the day of inspection as evidenced by the following.

1. No children attending on the day received a hot meal. Staff informed the inspector that there are 'one or two' children who occasionally bring in a ready meal or a flask of soup but generally children do not eat a hot meal while in the service.
2. There was a limited stock of dried food available for children who may require additional or alternative food. This was evident when one child had remained in the service unexpectedly and there were no extra supplies of food to offer to them.

#### Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

##### Corrective and Preventive Action

1. Parents have been asked again to send in a hot meal if their child attends for more than 5 hours. Management will regularly check with staff that parents are sending in a hot meal.
2. The dried foods store has been restocked and staff have been instructed to inform management when it needs restocked.

### Supporting documentation submitted

A copy of a notice send to parents was submitted to evidence compliance.

### Summary Comment

The response has been accepted as meeting the regulatory requirement and evidence of the change in practice will be reviewed on the next inspection.

## 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 main entrance to the service was secured preventing unauthorised access and children from exiting unsupervised. The outdoor play areas were enclosed with boundary fencing and the gates for entry and exit secured. Emergency exits were free from obstruction.
- Toys and equipment were maintained in good repair, suitable for the age and stage of development of the children using them and there were no obvious hazards or defects.
- The kitchen was inaccessible to children at all times. Cupboards were equipped with child safety lock mechanisms. Cleaning equipment and solutions were inaccessible to children.
- There were restrictors on the windows to prevent children exiting and the blind cords were adequately secured.
- Electrical cables were secured to ensure they were not trailing and posing a hazard to children.

#### Infection Control:

- Thermostatically controlled warm water and liquid soap were available in the children's sanitary accommodation to support good hand washing practices. Children were observed washing their hands at appropriate intervals throughout the day including after using the toilet, and before eating.
- Suitable disposable gloves and aprons were available and observed being used and disposed of by staff members after each individual nappy change. Staff members were observed washing their own hands when they removed the gloves after changing nappies.
- Cots were individual to each child and labelled to reflect same.
- Ventilation in each of the rooms was provided by openable windows. Ventilation in the sanitary accommodation and nappy changing areas was by way of either openable windows or a mechanical ventilation system.

- Staff were observed to be vigilant to children's need for support with cleaning their nose and this was provided in a sensitive and efficient manner. A supply of disposable tissues was available and accessible to support children in developing good hygiene practices.
- Children's food and snacks bring in from home were stored in the refrigerator until consumed.

### Administration of Medication:

- Medications were stored out of the reach of children. No children required medication to be administered on the day of inspection.

### Safe Sleep:

- Three standard cots were provided in the designated sleep room. Each cot was equipped with an appropriately fitting mattress which contained the recognised safety standard. The air temperature in the sleep room was measured within the safe range of 16-20°C. Documented records of sleep checks were noted to be maintained at 10 minutes intervals in the days leading up to inspection.

### Fire Safety:

- Fire exits were free from obstruction on the day of inspection.

### Outing:

- The service had a procedure in place for outings and this was followed on the day of inspection. The children were brought on an outing to another service for induction in the afternoon. The service had completed a risk assessment prior to the outing and parental consent had been obtained. Staff were observed preparing children for the outing and reminding them of appropriate behaviours and safety precautions required.

## Non-Compliance Information

### General Safety:

- A pest control box was located in an area accessible to children in the larger outdoor area.

### Infection Control:

- Open top bins were provided in the sanitary accommodation and in the care room. Foot pedal operated bins are required in all areas for the safe and hygienic disposal of waste.
- There was no waterproof covering on the three cot mattresses.

## Action submitted by the Registered Provider

### Corrective & Preventive Action

### General Safety:

- The pest control box has been moved outside the garden area. The company have been instructed not to place pest control boxes in the garden area.

## Infection Control:

- Foot pedal bins have been purchased and all open top bins have been removed from the building.
- Waterproof coverings were placed on all mattresses. Staff have been informed to make sure all cots have waterproof coverings. Laundry schedule has been changed to make sure there is always a supply of clean waterproof coverings.

## Supporting documentation submitted

A purchase invoice was submitted to evidence compliance.

## Summary Comment

The assurances made by the registered provider have been accepted as meeting the requirements of the regulation.