

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015DL064
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Name of Service:	Little Acorns Playgroup (Raphoe)
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Address of Service:	Congregational Church Hall, Derry Road, Raphoe, Donegal, Co. Donegal
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Eircode:	F93 NH0F
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Name of Registered Provider:	Kathleen Carter
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	02/12/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	15	PM	NA
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, TUSLA Child & Family Agency, Markievicz House, Barrack St, Sligo, F91 XC84
Inspection undertaken by:	K Folan
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

Little Acorns Playgroup is a privately run early years' service in Raphoe Co. Donegal. The service is registered to provide a sessional preschool service between the hours of 9.30a.m. and 12.30p.m. for 38 weeks of the year. The service caters for children aged 2-6 years of age. The preschool operated from a room within a large community hall. In addition, the children have access to a sectioned off area of the main hall to allow for extra playroom. The premises also contains an office, a kitchen and sanitary accommodation. A partially covered outdoor area is provided to the back of the building.

Staffing

There are three adults working in the service including the registered provider. Two adults work directly with the children on a daily basis. The registered provider works in a supernumerary capacity and is available to provide cover and assistance when required.

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

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9,11,15,16,23,25,27 and 28. however, on inspection additional non-compliance which posed a risk was identified under Regulation 29. 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 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

(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)
The registered provider ensured that.
- (a) There was a designated person in charge and a named adult to deputise in their absence.
 - (b) The designated person in charge was available on the premises throughout the period of inspection.
- (2)
On the day of the inspection three adults were present, including the registered provider.
On the most recent inspection dated the 20 June 2022, two staff files were reviewed and satisfactory.
It was advised by the person in charge that one new staff had commenced in the service since the inspection conducted on 22 June 2022. In addition, Garda vetting for three staff members whose disclosures were identified as due for renewal were requested for review.

One staff file was reviewed, and the following information was available:

- (b) Two written validated reference from reputable sources for one of the adults.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all adults. However, the service did not adhere to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years. Please refer to the information outlined under regulation 23 of this report.

(4)
One of the adult files reviewed, evidenced they held a major award at level 5 or above in early childhood care and education on the national qualification framework, or qualifications deemed by the Department of Children, Disability and Equality (DCDE) to meet the regulatory requirement.

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) On the day of inspection, there was an adequate number of adults working directly with the preschool children attending the service.
- (3) On the morning of the inspection two adults cared for 15 children aged between 3 to 4 years of age.

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.*

(4) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing referred to in paragraph (1) is retained for a period of 2 years from the date on which the child to whom it relates ceases to attend the service.

Compliance Information

(1) (a-i)

Ten records of the children attending the service were reviewed. The required information including the name and date of birth of each child, authorisation to collect the child, details of illness or special needs of the child, written parental consent for medical treatment in the event of an emergency and record of immunisations were fully completed for each child.

(3)(c)

The records in writing were available for inspection by the early year’s inspector.

(4)

The person in charge confirmed that the records are retained for the required period as set out in the regulations.

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:

- (a) the name, position, qualifications and experience of the person in charge and of every other employee, unpaid worker and contractor;*
- (b) details of the class of service and the age profile of children for which the service is registered to provide services;*
- (c) details of the adult:child ratios in the service;*
- (d) the type of care or programme provided in the service;*
- (e) the facilities available;*
- (f) the opening hours and fees;*
- (g) the policies, procedures and statements the service is required to maintain in accordance with Regulation 10;*
- (h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis;*
- (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.*

(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) (a-k)

The registered provider ensured that the required records outlined in (a) to (k) were kept in the service.

(3)

Records regarding Regulation 16 were present on the premises and made available to the inspector on the day of 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 door to the service was secure on the inspector's arrival, preventing unauthorised access to the service by an adult or a child leaving the service unsupervised.
- Cleaning materials were stored out of children's reach.
- The equipment in the care rooms was in good condition with toys stored in an orderly fashion in boxes.
- Emergency exit doors were unobstructed.
- Ventilation in the main playroom and sanitary accommodation was by means of openable windows.

Infection Control:

- Cleaning records were in place in each room which stated the areas to be cleaned each day.
- Staff supervised children's handwashing to ensure effective cleaning.
- Tables were wiped down after activities prior to snack time.
- Warm water, hand towels and liquid soap were available for handwashing.

Administration of Medication:

- On the day of the inspection no medicine was administered. Records of previously administered medication were available for review by the inspector. On discussion, the staff demonstrated their knowledge and awareness of the safe administration of medication.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. Garda vetting was available for one staff member. However, this vetting disclosure was not dated within the previous three years in adherence to with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice 'EYI-RN12.3 Renewal of Garda Vetting'.
2. Blind cords in the preschool room were not secured to the wall. It is acknowledged that the blind cords were out of the reach of the children on the day of inspection.
3. In the sanitary accommodation the cupboard door below the sink was unsecured and fell off when the inspector opened it. This poses a risk of injury to the preschool child.

Infection Control:

Foot operated pedal bins are required for the disposal of waste. The following bins were present on the day of inspection:

1. In the playroom, an open top bin was present for the disposal of handtowels, posing a risk of cross infection.
2. In the sanitary accommodation, swing top bins were present in the cubicles and main handwashing area.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. Garda vetting was applied for and a staff vetting tracker is in place to ensure Garda vetting is applied for in advance of the renewal dates.
2. All blind cords in the playgroup room have been secured to the wall.
3. The cupboard door under the sink in the main toilet area has been repaired and securely attached. Safety checks will be carried out each morning before the children arrive.

Infection Control:

All bins were removed and replaced with foot-operated pedal bins in the playroom, handwashing areas, and sanitary area.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

1. Documentary evidence submitted.
2. Photographic evidence submitted.
3. Photographic evidence submitted.

Infection Control:

1. Photographic evidence submitted.

Summary Comment

Evidence of an application for one staff for Garda vetting was reviewed however; a copy of the complete Garda vetting has not been submitted to the inspector to date. The registered provider is required to furnish the required documentation to the Inspectorate upon receipt. The noncompliance in relation to Regulation 23 remains out outstanding.'

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 registered provider ensured that a person trained in First Aid was available to the children. Two staff members in the service are trained First Aid Responders.

Non-Compliance Information

(2)(a)(b) The contents of the first aid box were inadequate to meet the needs of the preschool children. The majority of the bandages were expired with dates ranging from 2012 to 2022.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

All expired bandages were removed from the first aid box and have replaced with new, in date supplies. The remaining contents of the first aid box were complete and appropriate, and additional items were replenished that were due to expire within the next number of months.

To prevent reoccurrence, an explicit 'expiry date' record for bandages and other sterile items, now accompanies the existing monthly check. This ensures that any items with expiry dates will be monitored and replaced in advance.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence submitted.

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventive actions submitted by the registered provider adequately address the non-compliance found on inspection. This regulation is now compliant.

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 children in the service were supervised at all times. Adults positioned themselves within sight and sound of the children at all times. Supervision was provided to children while going between the playroom and the hall. During toilet breaks, adults accompanied children at all times. During snack time, staff moved between each table of children to ensure the children were supervised. In the outdoor area children were supervised while playing with balance bikes and ride on toys.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The registered provider had adequate insurance in place for 22 children attending a sessional service. The insurance policy commenced on 28 March 2025 and expires on 27 March 2026.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

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

(c) kept adequately lit, heated and ventilated

Non-Compliance Information

(c) The temperature of the service on the day of inspection ranged from 15.8°C in the preschool room to 16°C in the large hall which is below the required range of 18-22°C. It is acknowledged that the heating was turned on however the temperature failed to rise.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The heating system is now timed to ensure the rooms are warm and within the required temperatures when the children arrive. Two wall thermometers have been purchased and secured to the walls to allow for visual checks of the room temperature by staff.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence submitted.

Summary Comment

The registered provider has submitted evidence of the management of the heating system, and this has been accepted by the Early Years Inspectorate. This will be reviewed on the next inspection.

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