

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

<b>TUSLA Identifier:</b>	TU2015FL153
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<b>Name of Service:</b>	Little Acorns Montessori
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<b>Address of Service:</b>	18 Spring Lawn Court, Blanchardstown, Dublin 15, Co. Dublin
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<b>Eircode:</b>	D15 P2XK
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<b>Name of Registered Provider:</b>	Elizabeth Kelly
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<b>Service type:</b>	Sessional
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<b>Date of Inspection:</b>	25/09/2024
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<b>No of pre-school children:</b>	AM	7	PM	5
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<b>Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:</b>	Early Years Inspectorate, Floor 7 Brunel Building, Heuston South Quarter, St John's Road West, Kilmainham, Dublin 8 D08 X01F
<b>Inspection undertaken by:</b>	E. Griffin
<b>Title:</b>	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.

## Description of service

Little Acorns Montessori is a sessional service located in a residential area. The service provides sessional care and education to children aged 2-6 years and participates in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme. The service is open from Monday to Friday between 9:00am to 12:00pm for the morning session and 12:30pm to 3:30pm for the afternoon session. The service is located in a dedicated room in the registered provider's home with direct access to an outdoor play area in the garden.

## Staffing

The registered provider operates the service single handedly.

## 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 areas of governance, health, welfare and development of child and safety. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required. The following regulations were reviewed:

Regulation 9 (2) and (4)-Management and Recruitment.

Regulation 11 (1)(3) and (8)-Staffing Levels.

Regulation 15 Record of a Pre-School Child.

Regulation 19 (1)(a)-Health, Welfare and Development of Child.

Regulation 23 Safeguarding the Health, Safety, and Welfare of Child.

Regulation 25 First Aid.

Regulation Fire Safety measures.

Regulation 28-Insurance.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under: Regulation 15, Regulation 19 and Regulation 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 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,*

*(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) During the inspection the files of the registered provider and the named person to assist in the event of an emergency were reviewed.

(a) Four written and verified references were available from past employers.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures were available for the two adults. 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 not required as no adult had lived outside of the state for six months or more as an adult.

(4) Evidence was available to show that the registered provider who worked directly with the children held 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.

### 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) The registered provider ensured there were an adequate number of adults working directly with the children.*

*(3) The registered provider worked with seven children during the morning session and with five children during the afternoon session. The children in attendance ranged from 2-6 years old.*

*(8)(c) A named person is available to assist the registered provider in the event of an emergency.*

### 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-*

*(c) an authorised person.*

### Compliance Information

(1)(a) A sample of ten children's registration records taken from the morning and afternoon sessions were reviewed as part of the inspection. The registered provider ensured that the information required under (a)-(i) was maintained for each child.

(3)(c) Records were open to inspection by an authorised person. All records requested by the inspector were available for review.

## 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)

#### Basic Needs:

- Children brought snacks from home. Alternative snacks and drinks were available if required. The service has a healthy eating policy which is shared with parents/guardians in advance of enrolment. Children's own drinks were available within their reach throughout the session.
- Identity and belonging were promoted in the service. For example, there was a 'Family Wall' display, a 'Birthday Wall' display and the children's artwork was displayed throughout the care room.

- There was a small sofa, beanbag, cushions and books available for rest and relaxation. In addition, the outdoor play area had a partially sheltered area with tables and seating available for rest and relaxation.
- A health promoting ethos was implemented in the service in relation to supporting the children's emotional well-being. There was an 'Emotion' poster with different emotion pictures which supported children to describe how they were feeling. The registered provider was observed supporting a child in a comforting manner when they displayed signs of being upset during a transition from outdoors to indoors.
- Children were observed to access the outdoor play area this supports their social, cognitive, gross and fine motor development.

### Supporting Relationships:

- The registered provider was observed to be respectful, sensitive, and responsive in promoting independence skills and promoting children to make individual choices.
- During snack time the registered provider engaged in social conversation with the children, promoting a relaxed atmosphere. In addition, children were given sufficient time to finish their snack.
- Transition between 'play time' and 'tidy up time' was recognised and supported. For example, the registered provider gave children a five-minute verbal and visual notice for the children to continue to play before 'tidy up time'. This allows children to predict and cope with changes during the day.
- At snack time the children were observed to help set up the tables, this included the helper of the day giving out drinks and snacks. Each child had their own personalised place mat which they were observed to wipe down and put away after snack time. This promoted independence.
- The inspector observed the registered provider greeting parents at pick up times and chatting informally to parents about their child's day.

### Physical and Material Environment:

- There was a sufficient number of low tables and chairs to accommodate children whilst they played and ate in the care room.
- The furniture provided in the rooms was low level and suitable to the needs of the children. Equipment was visible and accessible enabling the children to independently access their choice of activity.

Equipment available included a library, arts and craft area, animals, various sorting, stacking, measuring, and connecting equipment, construction materials, sensory equipment, building bricks, jigsaws and transport vehicles including a fire station, cars and trains. These play materials facilitated literacy and numeracy development, fine motor skills, and cognitive and language development.

- There was a kitchen with props, baby dolls with props and a box of hairdressing equipment. These play materials provided opportunities for role play and imagination, for example the children in the afternoon session were observed to play 'hairdresser' with the dolls and supporting equipment.
- There was an outdoor play area to the back of the service. Children were observed to play with magnifying glasses and bug collecting equipment. One child was observed riding a toy car while another child filled up the car using the toy petrol pump. There was also a mud kitchen with supporting equipment, building blocks, toy transport vehicles and several ride-on toy vehicles.

### 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 of the service was secure when the inspector arrived unannounced to the service. This prevented unauthorised persons from gaining access to the premises and to prevent children from exiting the service unsupervised.
- The outdoor play area was secured with a surrounding wall this prevented unauthorised persons from gaining access to the outdoor play area and unauthorised exit of children.
- There were no flexes or cables observed that were accessible to the children.
- All plug sockets accessible to children had socket protector covers.
- The radiator in the care room had a protective radiator cover.
- Cleaning agents were stored safely out of the reach to the children.
- The registered provider was aware of choking hazards, including grapes. The inspector observed the registered provider check each container at lunchtime for uncut grapes and any potential choking hazards.



## Infection Control:

- The window was open in the care room to allow fresh air to circulate.
- The sanitary accommodation was equipped with warm running water, liquid soap, and hand drying facilities. Children and staff were observed to wash their hands throughout the inspection, including before meals and after toileting.
- Pedal bins were evident within the care room and sanitary area.
- The children's lunches which contained perishable items were observed to be refrigerated.

## Fire Safety:

- On the day of the inspection, it was observed that the emergency exit door was clear from obstruction. This ensured the safe effective evacuation of children and staff in the event of an emergency.

## 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 service provided evidence that a person trained in First Aid Response (FAR) training was available at all times to the children attending the pre-school.

(2)(a) and (b) Suitably equipped first aid boxes were available and were safely stored in an easily accessible and conspicuous position on the premises.

### 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.
- (2) The record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection by-
- (c) an authorised person.
- (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) Documentation was available to demonstrate that fire drills were practiced monthly. The last fire drill took place on 16 September 2024.
- (1)(b) The number, type and maintenance record of the firefighting equipment was up to date. Fire extinguishers were last serviced in March 2024. Smoke alarms were serviced in March 2024.
- (2)(c) Records were open to inspection by an authorised person. All records requested by the inspector were available for review.
- (4) Procedures detailing the steps to take in the event of a fire were displayed on the wall in the care room.

### Part VI - Safety

#### Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

#### Compliance Information

The registered provider ensured the service was insured. The insurance certificate provided for review showed cover for eleven children the service is registered to cater for at each session with an expiry date of 27 March 2025.