

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015GY006
--------------------------	-------------

Name of Service:	Acorn Pre-School
-------------------------	------------------

Address of Service:	37 Dun Na Mara Drive, Renmore, Co. Galway.
----------------------------	--

Eircode:	H91 V2KR
-----------------	----------

Name of Registered Provider:	Helen Hanley
-------------------------------------	--------------

Service type:	Sessional
----------------------	-----------

Date of Inspection:	12/12/2023
----------------------------	------------

No of pre-school children:	AM	7	PM	n/a
-----------------------------------	----	---	----	-----

Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Tusla – Child and Family Agency, Early Years Inspectorate, Quality Assurance Directorate, Clinical & Administration Building, Block A - (1st Floor- Green Corridor), Merlin Park, Galway.
Inspection undertaken by:	F. Nic Dhonnacha
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
---------------------------------	----------------

Description of service

Acorn Pre-school is a privately operated sessional service. An Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) and sessional care programme is offered Monday to Friday from 8.45hours to 11.45hours. A child centred play-based curriculum focusing on emerging interests with elements of Montessori is provided.

This premises is in an urban residential area of Renmore, in Galway city. The playroom is attached to the registered provider's home. The large playroom with a designated entrance is situated on the ground floor. Quiet rest areas are provided in the playroom for a child to take a rest or to opt out of an activity if they wish to. The children have access to a secure designated outdoor play area with an all-weather sheltered area for exploration, activities and exercise.

Staffing

The registered provider is the sole operator of this sessional service. There are two named persons familiar with the operation of the service and in a position to provide assistance, within a close distance of the service, to assist the registered provider in the event of an emergency. A total of one staff member works in the service holding a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 9 on the National Qualifications Framework. The staff member has documentary evidence of on-going training and education.

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

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

(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 ensured that she was the designated person in charge.
- (b) The registered provider was on the premises for the duration of the inspection. The staff roster indicated that she was available, on the premises at all times, when the pre-school children were present.
- (2)(a)(b) Six written references with evidence of verification were available from past employers or sources other than past employers.
- (c) Garda Vetting disclosures were available in respect of the three staff members working in the service.
- (d) International police vetting, or equivalent were available in respect of two staff who lived outside the state for a period of longer than six consecutive months as an adult.
- (4) Documentary evidence was provided to indicate that the one staff member working directly with and caring for the pre-school children in the service had obtained a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at 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.*
- (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 adult / child ratio was correct and maintained on the inspection day.
- (3) On the morning of the inspection, there were seven pre-school children present with one staff member directly caring for and supervising them. All children were aged between three to five years of age.
- (8)(c) The registered provider was the person in charge and operates the service single-headedly. Additionally, there were two adults within close distance of the service in a position to provide assistance 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.*

Compliance Information

- (1) A total of eight enrolment forms for children that are currently attending were reviewed by the inspector. The details relating to (1) (a) to (j) were documented on each record.

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*

(1) A registered provider shall, in providing a pre-school service, ensure that-

- (b) appropriate and suitable care practices are in place in the pre-school service, having regard to the number of children attending the service and the nature of their needs.*

Compliance Information

Basic Needs

(1)(a)(b)

- There was a healthy eating policy available on request.
- The children's snacks/ lunches looked nutritious with a variety of fruit, crackers, sandwiches, cheese, ham, and water to drink from their sippy cups.
- A water station was available in the playroom where the children could have access to a drink at all times throughout the session.
- The registered provider encouraged and supported the children to be independent while they had free play, tabletop activities, pretend play, story time and imaginative play.
- The children had unrestricted access to the toilet and did not have to wait to use the toilet.
- Children were encouraged and supported to develop self-help and personal hygiene skills.
- Children have plenty of opportunities to move themselves, to practice and improve their emerging skills, such as co-ordination and balance both indoors and outdoors. All the children had opportunities to explore their environment. On the day of inspection, the children ate together for their snacks/meal and had the freedom of movement within their playroom.
- There was a cosy area within the playroom with child size couches provided which could be adapted as a rest area for the children to relax or opt out of activities if they so wished.

Supporting Relationships

- The service supported children in forming and sustaining positive relationships with siblings, peers, and other children, by providing opportunities for small and large group activities and play, leading to increased social awareness, co-operation, collaboration, teamwork, and a sense of belonging.
- The children were observed at circle time listening to stories, singing action songs, and playing matching games. The children were observed playing in the playhouse, running, chasing, playing ball, strolling in a buggy, and pedalling in foot-controlled cars in the outdoor play areas.
- The children were observed at free play and at circle story time. The children were observed playing outside, running, jumping, pedalling, and exploring their environment. The children played on the slide and on the tricycles in the outdoor play area.

- On speaking with the registered provider, the inspector was informed that they verbally provided parents with daily information on their child's experiences in the preschool including the child's likes, interests and preferences and play activities engaged in. This information was provided at collection times and via text messages, by phone calls and by email. The service had a weekly email system to keep the parents and guardians up to date. Each child had individual profile scrapbooks, which captured the child's activities and experiences with documentary / photographic evidence and key adult observations. A classroom profile book was also available showing various activities and themes that the children engaged in.
- The service used a messaging / video application, and a designated childcare application for interactive communication with parents and guardians. There was also evidence of staff observations, developing learning stories, and parent teacher meetings at least twice a year.
- The registered provider was observed helping children to find solutions, supporting them, and talking to the children in a variety of ways, discussing, questioning, modelling, and commentating, extending a child's activities and initiating games and activities.
- The registered provider provided significant opportunities for the child to decide their play activities and experiences. The themes of the week were Polar Animals, Winter, and Christmas.

The Physical and Material Environment

- The indoor play area space was designed and arranged to maintain a space that was clean, organised, and free of clutter, accommodate children individually, in small groups and in a large group and to divide the space into areas that are supplied with materials organised in a way to support children's play and learning. The tables and chairs were suitable for the children's ages and stages of development.
- In the playroom items included a house with small world items, dress up clothing, dolls, action toys and a tea set. There were puzzles, links, connectors, numbers, tracks, stacking materials, pins, a clock, builders' tools, and doctors' sets. There were transport toys with tractors, and diggers. There were farm animals, and little people. There were soft seating, cushions, and books. There was a shop with real world items and cash register, and a kitchen with kitchen utensils. There was a creative area with paints, art, and craft materials. There were low desks for writing skills. There were tuff tables, black boards, mirror, and a height chart.
- Displayed on the walls were posters, visual aids children's artwork, themes, and schedules. Items included – family photographs, what's your favourite fruit, children on a nature walk collecting acorns and looking for various trees.

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 internal and external doors were appropriately secured to prevent children from exiting unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised visitors.
- All storage cupboards were secured, and cleaning agents stored out of reach of the children.
- The materials and equipment throughout the service were maintained in good condition.
- The double glass entrance doors had appropriate visibility strips/ pictures to maintain safety.
- The outdoor area was secured with a concrete walls and fencing.
- Blinds cords were secured by fasteners and thereby inaccessible to a pre-school child.
- Fire doors throughout the building were unobstructed.

Infection Control:

- Warm water, liquid soap, hand paper towels, pedal operated waste bins were available in the sanitary area.
- The staff member and children washed their hands at appropriate intervals which included: after messy play, outdoor play and after toileting and prior to mealtime.
- All perishable items from their lunch boxes were stored in the service fridge.
- All toys and materials were clean and maintained in good condition.
- Cleaning records were maintained for the indoor environment and available on request.

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 for children was available at all times to the children attending the pre-school service. The registered provider had current training in first aid for children.
- (2)(a) There was a first aid box with content items within date, safely stored, easily accessible and stored in a conspicuous position.
- (b) The service demonstrated that the first aid box was fully equipped and available to the children 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 firefighting 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) A written record for the completed monthly fire drills was available in the service. The last fire drill was recorded as taking place on the 15/11/2023.
- (b) Records were available demonstrating the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms on the premises.
- (4) A written fire action notice demonstrating the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire was displayed at the entrance to the service.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The service's insurance with an expiry date 27/03/2024 was for a sessional service for 10 children and included the following -

- public liability insurance;
- insurance against fire and theft;
- buildings insurance;
- insurance for outings undertaken as part of the service provision.