

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015GY128		
Name of Service:	Little Acorns Community Playschool		
Address of Service:	Kilcoona, Headford, Co. Galway		
Eircode:	H91 YN56		
Name of Registered Provider:	Andrew Reddington		
Service type:	Full Day		
Date of Inspection:	30/01/2024		
No of pre-school children:	AM	74	PM 57
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 City.		
Inspection undertaken by:	S. Meehan and F. Nic Dhonnacha.		
Title:	Early Years Inspectors.		

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 community full day care service is in a rural area of county Galway called Kilcoona which is near the town of Headford. The service is registered to open from Monday to Friday between 8am and 6pm and caters for children aged between 0 and 6 years of age. The sessional service operates from 9am to 12pm for 38 weeks of the year. The service also provides a registered school age service which consists of a breakfast club from 8 am to 9 am and the school aged service from 1.30 pm to 6.00 pm.

This detached 2 storey premises, is on its own grounds and has a total of 8 playrooms. The Bluebell room, Lilac room and Primrose room are on the ground floor and the Peony Rose room, the Daisy Room, and the Marigold room which was not in use are on the first floor.

The Acorn Lodge playroom is in a detached wooden cabin and supports the service's outdoor programme. The Annex playroom is in a detached premises used for both preschool children and school aged children.

Staffing

There was a total of 30 adults in the service which includes the manager, deputy manager, chef, kitchen assistant, cleaner and there were 27 adults working with the children on the day of inspection.

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.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9, 10, 11, 19, 25 and 30; however, on inspection additional non-compliance which posed a risk was identified under Regulation 8 and 23. 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 inspectors wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the person in charge, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

Part II - Registration and Register

Regulation 8 - Notification of change in circumstances

(1) A registered provider of a pre-school service other than a temporary pre-school service shall, subject to paragraph (3), notify the Agency in writing of any proposed change in the details in relation to the pre-school service contained in the register pursuant to section 58C(2) of the Act or Regulation 7(2) at least 60 days before it is proposed that the change would take effect.

Non-Compliance Information

(8)(1) The registered provider failed to notify the Agency Early Years Inspectorate of a change of circumstances in the preschool service. The service opened a new playroom called the Annex for preschool children aged 4 to 5 years and there were 9 preschool children in attendance on the morning of the inspection prior to notifying the Early Years Inspectorate.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The registered provider stated in their response that:

Corrective and Preventive Action

A change of circumstance form has been prepared and waiting a signature from the chairperson of the board. There is a playroom available which can be used for the children in the morning preschool until such times as the change of circumstance is complete. When changing rooms use in the future the manager will ensure that Tusla have been notified in advance.

Supporting documentation submitted

A copy of the change of circumstances form was submitted to the Early Years Inspectorate.

Summary Comment

The evidence and statement by the registered provider have been reviewed and it has been deemed that this has met the regulatory requirements of this part of the Regulations.

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 manager was the designated person in charge and there was a named person who was able to deputise as required.
- (b) During the period of inspection, the manager and deputy manager were on the premises.
- Thirty adult files were reviewed on the day of inspection:
- (2)(a) There were 53 written and appropriately validated references available from their most recent employer for adults working in the service.
- (b) There were 7 written and appropriately validated references available from a source other than a Recent employer for the adults working in the service.
- (c) Garda Vetting disclosures were available for the thirty adults working in the service.
- (d) Police Vetting disclosure was available for 5 adults working in the service that had lived and worked outside the jurisdiction for a period of over 6 months.
- (4) Twenty-seven adults working directly with children had obtained an award in Early Childhood Care and Education at level 5 on the National Qualifications Framework.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 10 - Policies, procedures etc. of pre-school service

A registered provider of a pre-school service shall ensure that the written policies, procedures and statements specified in Schedule 5 are in place for the service.

Compliance Information

All policies and procedures as specified in Schedule 5 were in place electronically for the service and a hard copy was available on request. The person in charge advised that all parents/ guardians of the children receive the information when their child is enrolled and commences in the preschool service.

Complaints Policy

The service has a complaints policy outlining the process and procedure for:

- How to make a complaint, who the named person in the service is that deals with complaints and that they are treated in a confidential manner.
- The implementation of the complaint's procedure and how the service deals with complaints.
- The manner through which a complaint is dealt with, and the procedures in which a complainant is kept up to date in relation to the complaint.
- The policy outlines the different steps in the complaint's process and the right of appeal.
- The service policy detailed that a record is maintained for two years from the date on which the complaint was made.

Non-Compliance Information

Safe Sleep Policy

It is acknowledged that the service had a safe sleep policy, but the policy did not include the following requirements:

- A sleep plan for children under 2 years of age if required and the children's individual needs met.
- Consideration of a child's developmental readiness to move from a cot to a bed.
- Measures to support a child's transition from a cot to a floor bed if required.
- A risk assessment of the sleep environment. A sleep plan incorporating a risk assessment should be completed before moving a child from a cot to a floor bed. An assessment of the sleep environment including the risk assessment. Sleep equipment for sleeping babies and children in ELC manufacturers guidance for sleep equipment should be followed and available for inspection. All equipment must have a CE mark meaning the product satisfies the legislative requirements to be sold in Ireland.

- Parental consultation should be sought and agreed for each individual sleep plan required and signed off by parents.
- Adequate supervision is required in line with best practice.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The registered provider responded to say that:

Corrective and Preventive Action

The sleep safe policy has been updated with the regard to a sleep plan being implemented if required when a child is transitioning from a cot to a bed in consultation with the parent. The policy now states that all mattresses are waterproof and that risk assessments are carried out. The sleep safe policy has been updated with the regard to a sleep plan being implemented if required when a child is transitioning from a cot to a bed in consultation with the parent.

Supporting documentation submitted

A copy of the updated safe sleep policy was submitted to the Early Years Inspectorate.

Summary Comment

The safe sleep policy was reviewed by the inspector and has been deemed to have met the requirements under this part of the Regulations.

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.

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

a registered provider of a pre-school service other than a child-minding service or a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that there are at least 2 adults on the premises at all times.

Compliance Information

(1) Documentary evidence indicated that an adequate number of staff were working directly with the children. At all times during the period of the inspection, the registered provider ensured that an adequate number of staff were working directly with the children.

(2) The registered provider ensured that the minimum ratio of adults to children specified was maintained.

On the morning of the inspection, there were 74 pre-school children present in the service and in the afternoon, there were 57 pre-school children present with 17 adults directly caring for and supervising these pre-school children.

The service also had a manager, deputy manager, student on placement, chef, an assistant in the kitchen and a cleaner. This was a total of 23 adults in the premises on the day of inspection.

(8)(a) The registered provider ensured that there were 2 staff on the premises at all times while the pre-school was operating.

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

19(1)(a) and (b)

BASIC NEEDS:

- Healthy eating was promoted within the service and special dietary needs were reflected in the 3-week menu plan. The children ate their snacks provided by their parents and guardians. Perishable items were stored in the fridge prior to snack time. Children were offered cereals or porridge for their breakfast. The morning snack consisted of fruit with homemade brown bread/ scones, jam, butter and the choice of milk or water.
- The hot meal of the day was roast pork, vegetables, mashed potatoes and gravy. The afternoon snack consisted of brown bread with cheese, yogurts, fruit or rice cakes with milk or water.
- Crockery and plates were offered and used during children's snack and meal times and were appropriate for the age and stage of development of the children.
- Children were given enough time to eat and enjoy their snack and meals without being rushed. Adults sat with the children during snack and mealtimes and engaged with the children.
- Children's own bottles were available and accessible on a drinks table to allow children to self-serve when thirsty in each playroom. Extra drinking water was available if required.
- The adults supervised children's hand washing before and after snack time, after toileting, after blowing their noses, after outdoors and messy play.
- The children were encouraged by the adults and supported to manage their own personal care appropriate to their level of independence.
- The children who were toilet trained, toileted independently or with some assistance as required.

- There was a total of 34 children who were in nappies in the service. The children's nappies were changed in a timely manner by adults and they were observed to engage with children in a positive manner throughout the nappy changing process. The correct nappy changing procedure was observed on the day.
- The playrooms were laid out with visual cues and displays to support each child's individual needs. This assisted children to make smooth transitions from one activity to the next.
- There was a quiet rest area with soft seating, in the playrooms to accommodate children's rest or to opt out of an activity.
- The children were engaged in a variety of activities which were both children and adult led. They were observed in circle time, sensory play, table top activities, sharing stories with the group, artwork and one to one work with the support of the adults working with them.
- All the children played outside during the day of inspection and were suitably dressed when playing in the outdoor environment.

Outdoor area:

- The outdoor play areas to the rear and side of the premises were divided into separate play areas which the service had designated to specific children.
- The designated play areas had a combination of grass and tarmac surfaces and there were concrete pathways. The outdoor play areas were surrounded by metal fencing, trees and boundary walls.
- Play equipment and materials provided in the outdoor area supported a range of physically energetic activities and play experiences. The outdoor area was large and offered a variety of interest areas for children to discover and play throughout the day. There was a large selection of ride on toys, climbing frames, sand pits, sensory garden with a willow tunnel, planting areas, a large shelter area for inclement weather and a den for children to play in. The outdoor play area offered fine and gross motor skills, imaginary and sensory play opportunities for the preschool children.

SUPPORTING RELATIONSHIPS AROUND CHILDREN:

- A key worker system was in place for each child to support their development and to inform curriculum planning. The role of the key worker was also to liaise with parents or guardians.
- The service verbally provided parents and guardians with daily information on their child's experiences in the pre-school including the child's likes, interests, preferences, and play activities engaged in.

This information was shared at collection times, via text messages, by phone calls, a childcare application and by email.

- Each individual child's learning profile journal was available for inspection detailing the years work and activities to date and the observations carried out by the adults directly working with them.
- Adults used a variety of age-appropriate materials, visual aids, songs, and rhymes to assist children in their learning and development. These also help children in their various transitions from one activity to the next.
- Adults were observed to be caring and supportive in their interactions with the children. Adults were observed to be interested in the children, spoke in low soft tone of voice, listened to them, and responded to their ques throughout the day.
- Adults interacted in a positive way with the children e.g., they sat at children's level, maintained good eye contact, showed empathy and were familiar with each child's needs.
- Adults nurtured and supported children's needs and were familiar with their routine.
- Adults were observed to have worked as a team planning and organising the day, communicating with each other and assisting each other as required.
- The service was observed to be respectful of inclusion and diversity within the setting. Childrens dietary requirements, culture, food and nationality was celebrated.

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.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

Powdered infant formula for children in the Baby room, was not prepared in accordance with the Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI) best practice guidance, which advises that powdered infant formula should be made up at home. Staff advised that they made up bottles on site. This may pose as a risk of contamination and harm to a preschool child.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

Our policy and procedure have been updated and relayed to parents and staff. Parents now send in ready-made formula. A bottle fridge has been installed in the baby room to store the bottles. A link to the FSA guidance has also been supplied to parents. The policy has been implemented and a new fridge purchased.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

Copy of updated policy and instruction issued to parents.

Summary Comment

The evidence submitted has been reviewed and has met the requirements of this part of the regulations.

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 responder for children was available at all times to the preschool children attending the preschool service. Four adults had current training in first aid responder. There were seventeen adults trained in basic first aid.
- (2)(a) There were first aid boxes available in designated areas throughout the service, safely stored, easily accessible and in conspicuous positions.
- (b) The service demonstrated that the first aid boxes were fully equipped, with content items in date and available to the children attending the service at all times.