

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			
Dates of Inspection:	20/01/2026			
Date 2 of Inspection:	21/01/2026			
No of pre-school children:	AM	90	PM	73
Day 2	AM	84	PM	70
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Quality and Regulation Directorate, Clinical & Administration Building, Block A - (1st Floor- Green Corridor), Merlin Park Hospital, Galway.			
Inspection undertaken by:	E. Friel and S. Meehan			
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

Little Acorns Community Playschool offers a range of services which provides care and education on a full day, part-time and sessional basis to children from 0 to 6 years of age. It has been in operation since 1999 and operating hours are from 08:00 to 18:00, Monday to Friday, for 51 weeks of the year. The Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme operates within these hours from 09:00 to 12:00, 38 weeks of the year. A school age care service is available in the morning from 08:00 to 09:00 and in the afternoon from 13:30 to 18:30. The service is in the rural village of Kilcoona in north county Galway. There are seven indoor care rooms namely Bluebell, Lilac and Primrose on the ground floor and Peony Rose, Daisy, Marigold 1 and Marigold 2 on the first floor. In addition, there are two outdoor sessional services operating in the large outdoor area namely Acorn Lodge and the Annex Playroom. There are adult and child sanitary facilities both indoors and outdoors, a kitchen where all food is prepared by the cook indoors, a staff room and two sleep rooms. There are five large outdoor play areas located at the rear of the service and a car park is available at the front of the service.

Staffing

The service employs a total of 43 adults including 3 adults employed under the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM), one contractor that works directly with children and one contractor who only works with the adults and does not have access to the children. In addition, there are six school age care staff, one cook, one kitchen assistant and one cleaner. The registered provider does not work in the service.

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 and safety. 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 inspectors wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the person in charge, deputy, 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, and
- (c) there is a clear management structure in the service that identifies the lines of authority and accountability in the service and the specific roles and responsibilities of each employee and unpaid worker.

(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.

(6A) Paragraph (4) shall not apply to an employee of a registered provider where - (a) the registered provider receives funding for the employment of the employee pursuant to a scheme funded by the Minister and known as the Access and Inclusion Model.

Compliance Information

- (1)
- (a) The service had a designated person in charge, deputy and three named persons available to deputise if required.
 - (b) Either the designated person in charge or deputy and two of the named persons were onsite while the early years children were on the premises.
 - (c) There was a clear management structure in place in the service which was detailed in the parent handbook which was confirmed with staff during discussions with the inspectors.

- (2) Documentation was assessed for 21 adults; 20 adults who had commenced employment in the service since the last date of inspection on the 30 January 2024 and the registered provider's file was also reviewed. A contractor was employed to work with the adults by the service however, as they had no access to or contact with the children a staff file was not required.
- (a) The managers demonstrated that 27 of the 42 required validated references were from previous employers.
- (b) The remaining 15 of the 42 validated references were from sources other than past employers.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures were available for 21 adults demonstrating compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew garda vetting every 3 years.
- (d) International police vetting was available for four of five adults who had lived outside the state for a period exceeding six months as an adult.
- (4) There was evidence that 17 of the 21 adults had attained at least a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 to a level 8 on the National Framework of Qualifications or a qualification deemed to be equivalent. The remaining four adults did not require a childcare qualification.
- (6A) There were three adults employed in the service under the Access and Inclusion Model.

Non-Compliance Information

- (2)
- (d) Overseas police vetting was missing in respect of one adult for whom it was required, posing a risk to the children.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

- (2)
- (d) The application has been submitted and the international police vetting will be sent on when it is received. New documentation is now in place to ensure that all required information is in place prior to any person being appointed, having access to or contact with the children.

Supporting documentation submitted

- (2)
- (d) Copies of emails from two relevant agencies were received in the office of the inspectorate, confirming acknowledgment of receipt of application for international police vetting for the person for whom it was required. However, a copy of the complete international police vetting has not been submitted to date.

Summary Comment

Regulation 9 (2) (d) remains non-compliant as the international police vetting remains outstanding. The registered provider is required to furnish the required documentation to the Inspectorate upon receipt.

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) 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) At all times during the two days of inspection, the registered provider ensured that an adequate number of adults were working directly with the children.

(2) Documentary evidence in the form of attendance records and the staff roster indicated that adult child ratios were adhered to. On day 1 of inspection there were 27 adults working directly with 90 children and on day 2 there were 28 adults working with 84 children.

(8)

(a) The registered provider ensured that there were at least two adults on the premises while the children were attending the service.

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

- (a) The name, position, qualifications and experience of the registered provider, manager, deputy manager and staff were observed to be kept in the staff recruitment files in the office.
- (b) Details of the class of service and the age profile of children for which the service is registered to provide were available on the Tusla Registration Certificate displayed on the notice board in the reception area and in the parent handbook.
- (c) The details of the adult child ratios were available in the parent handbook.
- (d) (e) (f) The type of care programme available was detailed in the Parent Handbook along with the facilities available, opening hours and fees.
- (g) The services policies and procedures, required for Regulation 10, were kept in soft form in the office and

were referenced in the parent handbook.

(h) Attendance records for each child were available and stored on the multimedia application. The recorded entry and exit times of the children were observed to be within the operating hours of the service from 08:00 to 18:00.

(i) The staff rosters were noted to have been completed daily with each adult's hours of work and lunch break recorded.

(j) Details of the medication administered in the service was available for one child and found to have all the required information recorded.

(k) The four accident/incident forms recorded from September 2025 through to the 20 January 2025 were reviewed. These were found to contain all the particulars required.

(3) The records referred to above were open to review on the premises.

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

19(1)(a)

Basic Needs:

- The healthy eating policy was available for parents and guardians to view. The snacks and hot meals were appropriate to the age and stage of development of the children. On day 1 the hot meal of the day was pasta bolognese. An alternative was offered if required. They offered homemade bread and fruit in the afternoon. On day 2 the children had bacon, vegetables and home made white sauce. Beef casserole was available as an alternative. In the afternoon children had custard, apple and french toast. Children's individual food preferences were respected in line with the service's healthy eating policy. Children who asked for additional food were facilitated.
- Young children were given the opportunity to feed themselves appropriate to their age and stage of development and were assisted where necessary.
- Perishable items that were belonging to preschool children were stored in the service fridges.

- Crockery and plates were offered and used during children’s mealtimes and were appropriate for the age and stage of development of the children.
- Children attending the service who were toilet trained were independent at toileting or offered some assistance or support by adults as required.
- Younger children in nappies had them changed in a timely caring manner by the adults. Adults were observed picking up on childrens cues throughout the day.
- The children’s self-care was assisted and encouraged by adults for example to wash their hands prior to eating, after toileting, after outdoor play, after using a tissue and after messy play.
- In the indoor and outdoor playrooms, the children had the opportunity to rest or relax with soft seating in the form of child size couches in designated cosy areas.
- Stackable beds and clean linen were available for sleep and the playrooms were converted into sleep rooms during the day. During the sleep period children were physically supervised in the playroom and designated sleep rooms by adults.
- There was also two designated sleeprooms for children under two years of age, in sleeproom 1 there were eight cots and in sleeproom 2 there were eight cots.
- Appropriate outdoor clothing and boots were provided for the children. On both days the weather was wet and cold. Children were appropriately wrapped up to keep them warm.
- There were outdoor play areas to the rear of the premises which had age-appropriate divided play areas that were clearly defined based on the age of the children. There was a shed with a sandpit for sensory play and a polytunnel with clearly defined interest areas which were available for the outdoor service. Beside the Annex outdoor playroom there was a shed for the storage of ride on toys and equipment.
- The play equipment and materials provided in the outdoor areas supported a range of physically energetic activities and play experiences for children. Examples included a tunnel built into the play area, toad stools to sit on, activity centre, benches, tables, tyre area and a natural rock play area.
- A variety of surfaces which included a tarmac area, grass and a track were available providing alternative surfaces to play on.

Supporting Relationships

- Children’s behaviour was consistently managed in a positive manner by adults, with an emphasis on positive reinforcement and encouragement. Children were shown positive strategies to manage their

behaviour during the day by adults. An example included two children observed wanting the same toy and the adult intervened to help the children find a positive solution and to learn to share.

- Adults were observed to show empathy and to speak to children in a caring and sensitive manner throughout the day.

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

Safe Sleep:

- There were 2 designated sleep rooms with 16 cots available for children under 2 years of age. In addition, there were 34 stackable beds and 15 sleep mats available for children over 2 years of age.
- The designated sleep rooms for children over 12 months were maintained between 18-22°C on both days of inspection. A thermometer was available for adults to measure and monitor the room temperatures.
- Cellular blankets were provided and waterproof covers were visible on the cot mattresses. Clean bed linen was also available for children.
- Air conditioning was available to reduce temperatures as required.

Non-Compliance Information

Safe Sleep:

1. Contrary to the service's safe sleep policy 10-minute physical sleep checks were not documented to ensure the safety of the sleeping children in the Bluebell care room. At 14:00 the inspector observed 8 children aged between 1 year 10 months and 2 years 6 months asleep on stackable beds. In conversation, an adult supervising in the care room stated that no sleep checks had been recorded for these children.
2. Appropriate sleep equipment was not in use for two children under 2 years observed sleeping on stackable beds in the Bluebell care room. This was at variance with the "Safe Sleep Guidance for Children under 24 months". In conversation the adult stated that they were unaware of the requirements for sleep beds, sleep plans and risk assessments for children under 2 years of age.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

The following statements were received from the manager;

Safe Sleep:

1. A staff meeting was held where the sleep safe policy was discussed in great depth. All staff are now aware of the requirement to record 10-minute physical sleep checks on all resting/sleeping children on the digital application.
2. Appropriate sleep equipment is now in place for all children resting/sleeping aged under 2 years as per "Safe Sleep Guidance for Children under 24 months". The sleep policy is displayed in the Bluebell care room which details the requirements for a risk assessment and sleep plan for each child, which must be agreed in collaboration with parents/guardians, where it has been identified that a child younger than 15 months is developmentally ready to sleep on a floor bed.

Supporting documentation submitted

The following documentation and photographs were received in the office of the inspectorate;

Safe Sleep:

- 1 and 2. Receipts for 10 new sleep beds for children under 2 years of age, copies of sleep plans, risk assessments and 10-minute sleep checks recorded on the digital application now carried out by adults for children in the Bluebell room.

Summary Comment

The actions taken and evidence submitted by the manager have adequately addressed the non-compliances identified under Regulation 23 Safe Sleep (1 and 2).

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 to the children attending the early years service. Twenty-nine adults had current training as First Aid Responders (FAR).
- (2)
- (a) (b) The first aid boxes in each of the care rooms were stored within reach of the adults and were accessible throughout the two days of inspection.

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) A written record was available of the monthly fire drills completed in the service. The last recorded fire drill was the 09 December 2025.
- (b) Records were available in relation to the number, type and maintenance of fire-fighting equipment with the annual service dated 29 August 2025. The smoke and fire detection alarm system for the premises had the last annual service dated 13 January 2026.
- (2)
- (c) The monthly fire drills, fire-fighting equipment certificate and smoke and fire detection certificates were open to inspection on the premises.

(4) Notices were displayed within the service of the procedures to be followed in the event of fire on the premises.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

Documentation was furnished which evidenced that the registered provider had insurance for the number of children attending and type of service provided.