

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015KE124
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Name of Service:	Acorn Montessori and Creche
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Address of Service:	Osberstown Road, Naas, Co. Kildare
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Eircode:	W91 EC80
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Name of Registered Provider:	Shauna Kehoe
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Service type:	Full Day
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Date(s) of Inspection:	20/08/2024
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No of pre-school children:	AM	25	PM	41
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Tusla Child and Family Agency, Suite 7, Vista Primary Care, Ballymore Eustace Road, Naas, Co. Kildare, W91 X38W
Inspection undertaken by:	E. Mulhern and F. Maher
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

Acorn Montessori and Creche is a privately operated early years service open since 2007. The service is registered to provide full day, part-time and sessional education and care to children aged 1 to 6 years from 7.30am to 6.30pm, Monday to Friday. A school aged service is provided also.

The service operates from a two-storey, purpose-built premises in a rural setting between Naas and Sallins in County Kildare. The service has six care rooms, a sleep room, sanitary facilities and outdoor areas at the rear of the service. Five care rooms were in use for pre-school children on the day of inspection.

Staffing

Eight staff members were allocated to work directly with the pre-school children on the day of inspection. A ninth staff member and the registered provider provided break cover and assistance as needed. The cook and a staff member who worked directly with the school-aged children were also present.

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 inspection may also focus on other

areas as required. The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under the following regulations. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

Regulation 9 (1)(a), (2) & (4) - Management and Recruitment

Regulation 11 (1) & (2) - Staffing Levels

Regulation 15 (1) - Record of a Pre-School Child

Regulation 16 (1)(h), (i), (j), (k) - Record in Relation to Pre-School Service

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

Regulation 27 - Supervision

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 registered provider, 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.

Compliance Information

- (1)
- (a) The service had a person in charge and a named person to deputise.
 - (b) Both the person in charge and a named person who could deputise were on the premises during the inspection. The staff roster provided for either the person in charge or named deputy to be present at all times of opening.
 - (c) The service had a clear, documented management structure.
- (2) The registered provider ensured that all staff were suitable and competent prior to employment as outlined:

- (a) & (b) It was evident that adequate consideration had been given to references for all staff members. References had been sourced from their past employers and from another source where they had only one or no previous employers. All references had a record of verification checks carried out.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures were available for all staff members. Garda vetting disclosures had been renewed in accordance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, which requires services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
- (d) International police vetting had been sourced for all staff members who had lived in another state for more than six months as an adult.
- (4) All staff employed to work directly with children held at least a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 on the National Framework of Qualifications or a qualification deemed equivalent by the Minister.

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) An adequate number of adults were working with the children. Eight staff members were allocated to work directly with 25 children in the morning and 41 children in the afternoon. A ninth staff member and the person in charge were available to provide break cover and assistance as needed.
- (2) The minimum adult to child ratio requirement was always maintained.

(8) (a) There were at least two adults on the premises throughout the inspection. The staff roster provided for a minimum of two adults to be present at all times of opening.

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

A sample of ten records for children were reviewed. The records detailed the required information as outlined.

- (a) The name and date of birth of each child.
- (b) The date when each child first attended the service.
- (c) Not applicable, as the records reviewed pertained to children who were still in attendance.
- (d) The name, address and telephone number of parents and information where parents can be contacted.
- (e) Names and contact details of other adults authorised to collect the child.
- (f) Medical information, allergies, dietary preferences, additional needs, and other information specific to the child.
- (g) The name and telephone number of the child’s medical practitioner.

(h) Immunisation details.

(i) Signed parental consent for medical treatment in the event of an emergency.

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:

(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.

Compliance Information

(1) The registered provider ensured that a record in writing was kept of required information as outlined:

(h) Details of children's attendance, including their arrival and departure times at the service, were readily available.

(i) A staff roster was available detailing the start and finish times for all staff members.

(j) A sample of ten records documenting medication given to children was reviewed. Each record included appropriate details and was accompanied by signed parental consent.

(k) Records detailing accidents, injuries, and incidents involving children were readily available. A sample of ten records was reviewed. Each record contained appropriate information.

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-

(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

(1)(b) The registered provider ensured that suitable care practices were in place. The adult's demonstrated knowledge of the individual children in their care including their likes, dislikes and how they care for children with additional needs. Children were comforted when they became upset with adult's holding them, speaking to them softly and responding to their needs. Meals, snacks, and drinks were prepared in the service and provided at regular intervals. Adults sat with the children when they were eating and provided help when needed. A drinks station was provided in each room, and these were brought outside when children were playing.

The adults supported the children to manage their personal care; they placed bibs on the younger children to protect their clothes from becoming soiled or wet when eating; they helped the children to clean their faces and hands when needed; they checked the children's nappies regularly and changed them promptly when required; they supported older children to use the toilet independently; they applied sun screen lotion to children's exposed skin before going outside to play in the warm weather. The adults used these opportunities for warm one-to-one interactions.

Children attending the Toddler room were provided with an opportunity to sleep in cots in the adjoining sleep room after lunch. The Toddler room was available at this time for children from the Montessori 1 and 2 rooms who required sleep. This was laid out with low beds and linen appropriate to the age and stage of the children. Staff demonstrated an understanding of how to make sure children were comfortable and safe for sleep including removing children's shoes and outer clothing, offering soothers to those who used them and monitoring sleeping children.

The staff used an app to communicate in real time with parents/guardians in relation to the individual children's care. This included information relating to diet, sleep, care provided and daily activities.

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 registered provider ensured that children were always appropriately supervised. An appropriate number of adults were always working directly with the children. The adults demonstrated an awareness of the names and the number of children who were directly in their care at any given time. The inspector observed the adults appropriately supervising the children when they were in the outdoor area, in their rooms and when they were using the sanitary facilities. Staff ensured a relieving adult was present and provided with a brief handover before leaving for their breaks.