

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015KK049
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Name of Service:	Little Acorns
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Address of Service:	Flower Hill, Rosbercon, New Ross, Co Wexford (FOR POST), Co. Kilkenny
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Eircode:	Y34 PD71
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Name of Registered Provider:	Carol Leavy
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Service type:	Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	15/01/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	38	PM	8
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Ely Hospital, Child and Family Agency, Ferrybank, Wexford.
Inspection undertaken by:	E Mc Garry
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
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Description of service

Little Acorns is a service situated in the countryside on the outskirts of New Ross. The service is registered to provide a sessional Early Years Care and Education (ECCE) programme and part-time service to children aged 2 to 6 years of age. It is open from 09:00 to 16:00 for 42 weeks per year. The service is currently providing a morning sessional service from 09:00 to 12:30 with an option for some children to attend part time until 14:00. The service does not provide an afternoon sessional service currently. The service operates from a purpose-built facility situated in the grounds of the registered provider's home. The premises consists of two preschool rooms, toilets, a hallway, office, a kitchenette, an outdoor classroom, and a large outdoor area to the front of the premises.

Staffing

There are seven staff employed in the service. The registered provider also works directly with the children. All staff working directly with the children held the minimum of level 5 and above on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ).

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 compliance under the following regulations:

Regulation 9 Management and Recruitment (1) (2) (a) (b) (c) (d) (4),

Regulation 10 Policies and Procedures,
Regulation 11 Staffing levels (1) (3),
Regulation 15 Record of a preschool child,
Regulation 21 Equipment and Materials,
Regulation 23 Safeguarding Health, Safety, and Welfare of the Child,
Regulation 25 First aid (1) (2) (a) (b),
Regulation 26 Fire Safety (1) (a) (b) (4).
Regulation 28 Insurance.

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, 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

(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)(b)

The registered provider was the person in charge on the day of inspection.

(2)(a)(b)

Following a discussion with the registered provider and on review of documentation, it was established that there were seven staff employed in the service. Written and validated references were available on file for all staff working in the service.

(c)

There was Garda vetting available on file in the service for all staff members. The service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice to renew Garda vetting every 3 years for all staff.

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(d)
Police vetting was available on file for two staff who had lived in a state other than Ireland for a period of longer than six consecutive months.

(4)
There were qualifications on file for all staff working directly with the children. These staff held an award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 and above 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

There were policies and procedures in place in the service specified in Schedule 5 of these regulations. The policies reviewed for this inspection were the policy on healthy eating and the policy on infection control in the service.

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.

Compliance Information

(1)

At all times there was an adequate number of staff working directly with the children.

(2)

At 11:00

There were 38 children in the care of 6 staff.

At 13:20

There were 8 children in the care of 3 staff.

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

There was a registration form available in respect of each child enrolled in the service. A sample of 10 forms completed by the parents were reviewed as part of the inspection process and were found to contain all the information required under parts (a) – (i) of this regulation.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 17 – Information for parents

A registered provider shall ensure that a parent or guardian of a child proposing to attend the service is provided with the information referred to in subparagraphs (a) to (g) of Regulation 16(1).

Compliance Information

There was a registration form available in respect of each child enrolled in the service. A sample of 10 forms completed by the parents were reviewed as part of the inspection process and were found to contain all the information required under parts (a) – (i) of this regulation.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 21 – Equipment and materials

A registered provider shall ensure that there is adequate and suitable furniture, play and work equipment and materials available on the premises of the pre-school service.

Compliance Information

Both preschool rooms were resourced with play equipment for the learning and enjoyment of the children. The play equipment was displayed on open shelves and labelled boxes which allowed the children to access the toys and play equipment independently. The area of interests were developed for the children. There was a home corner with a supply of equipment for children to play with. There was original art displayed which the children had painted on drying racks in the rooms. There was an extensive supply of story books for the children to read situated next to the rest areas in the rooms.

There was a dress up area which had been resourced with a variety of outfits for children to wear while enjoying free play.

The children had lots of room to move about the large preschool rooms. There were two outdoor areas. The first area was a large, grassy area with a pagoda and seats where children could sit. The large, tarmacked area to the front of the service provided a surface for the children to enjoy playing on the ride on toys provided. Children were observed drawing with chalk and also playing hopscotch on the chalk squares drawn by the staff.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 22 – Food and drink

A registered provider shall ensure that adequate and suitable, nutritious and varied food and drink is available for each pre-school child attending the pre-school service.

Compliance Information

The service had a healthy eating policy which was shared with parents in the information handbook given to parents when they enrolled their child in the service. The children were observed having their morning snack. Parents had provided a variety of food for the children to enjoy. There were sandwiches, diced fruit and vegetables, yogurts and some homemade biscuits. Children were given water to drink and had their water bottles refilled as required.

The children who were attending on a part time basis were given a snack when the children who were attending on a sessional basis had gone home.

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 external door was secured to prevent children from exiting unsupervised and to prevent unauthorised people gaining access to the service. Access was gained to the service by ringing the bell. The gate to the play area was secured before and during the time the children were playing in the area. All cleaning agents were stored on shelves which were inaccessible to children. The outdoor area was safe, suitable, and secure. Staff had placed cones outlining the perimeter of the play area for the children.

Infection control:

The service had an infection control policy. Children were observed washing their hands after using the toilet and after messy play. The service was clean with no obvious maintenance required.

Accident and incidents

The service had a policy on the management of accidents and incidents in the service. Previous records of accidents and incidents which had occurred in the service were reviewed by the inspector. Records were signed by parents and were in line with the policy in place in the service.

Outings

The service does not accommodate outings.

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)

There was a person trained in first aid responder course available to the children.

(2)(a)(b)

There was a suitably equipped first aid box stored in an easily accessible position on the premises and was available to the children.

Non-Compliance Information

There was only one staff member trained in a first Aid Responder course working in the service. When this person was not on duty, there would be no person available to cover the roster in the service. Preschool services are required to have a person trained in first aid responder course available to the children at all times.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

One more staff member has reserved a place on the next training course to complete a first aid responder course locally. This training is due to be completed in March 2026. The registered provider plans to reserve places for two more staff member to complete training in the next calendar year.

Supporting documentation submitted

The inspector received confirmation one staff member has reserved a place on a first aid responder course.

Summary Comment

The response and evidence submitted is satisfactory to meet The Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016.

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

There was a record of fire drills that had taken place in the service. The last fire drill was recorded as having taken place in service on December 25.

(b)
There was a record stating the smoke alarm and firefighting equipment was last serviced in September 2025.

(4)
There was a notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of fire displayed in a conspicuous position in the main entrance hallway of the service.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

There was adequate insurance in place to cover the number of children the service was registered to accommodate.