

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015KY066		
Name of Service:	Little Acorns Kilgarvan		
Address of Service:	Kilgarvan Childcare Action Group, Fussa, Kilgarvan, Co. Kerry		
Eircode:	V93 TN64		
Name of Registered Provider:	Emma Riordan		
Service type:	Part Time		
Date of Inspection:	13/02/2025		
No of pre-school children:	AM	16	PM 9
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Department, Child & Family Agency, Hospital Grounds, Coolnagarrane, Skibbereen, Co Cork P81 PD78		
Inspection undertaken by:	M. O Reilly		
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	N/A		

Description of service

Little Acorns Kilgarvan is an established early years service that first opened in 2006. It is a community-based service that provides part time and sessional care. It is registered to accommodate a maximum of 30 children aged between 1 to 6 years and for children attending the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme. Daily opening hours are from 08:30 to 14:00 hours each day Monday to Friday. One group commence at 08:30 and the other group commence at 9am with no child longer than five hours in the service.

The service operates from a modern, single storey, detached, purpose-built community building. There are two playrooms, outdoor play areas, adequate number of toilet and nappy changing facilities. There is a designated sleep room, kitchen and staff room. Spacious on-site parking allows for the safe arrival and departure of the children with their families.

Staffing

There were five staff employed to work directly with the early years children including the named registered provider/the person in charge in the service. There was 1 of the 5 staff employed under the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) Support Scheme. There were two additional ancillary workers enlisted in the service. The administration and cleaner, both adults work in the service one day a week during the hours of operation. The staff who work directly with the early years children all hold a recognised qualification in Early Childhood Care 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/person in charge, 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) There was a named person in charge and a deputy available to deputise as required.
 - (b) The person in charge and the deputy were present on the premises on day of the inspection.
- (2) Documentation was assessed in relation to the requirements of Regulation 9 for seven staff members. The following records were available for the seven staff:
- (a) Of the required fourteen references, all references were from previous employers with records of validation on file.
 - (b) Not applicable, as there were no references from another source other than a previous employer.
 - (c) A Garda vetting disclosure was available on file in respect of the seven staff. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) Five police vetting records were on file for the staff members who had resided outside the jurisdiction for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months.

(4)
There was evidence that the five staff members that worked directly with the children had attained a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education on the National Framework for Qualifications, or a qualification deemed to be equivalent, as listed 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.

(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)
The person in charge ensured that there were an adequate number of adults working directly with the children in each room on day of the inspection.

(2)
During the period of inspection, the ratio of staff to children was maintained as per the regulations and an adequate number of adults were working directly with the children in the playrooms in operation.

Creche Room

There were 2 children aged over 2 years present in this room categorized as sessional and part time with 2 adults in attendance. This room was not in operation after 12:30 hours as there was 1 child present and the 2 staff and child joined the staff and children in the preschool room.

Preschool Room

There were 14 children aged between 3 to 6 years with 6 attending on a sessional basis with 8 remaining to avail of part time care. There were 3 adults in attendance.

(8)(a)
Staff rosters indicated that there were always 2 adults on the premises during the hours-of-service operation.

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

Basic Needs

- The service promoted healthy eating and the food provided by the parents and guardians for the mid-morning snack and the lunch for children attending part time was observed to be healthy and nutritious and offered to the children in a timely manner.
- Children's toileting and hygiene needs were promptly and sensitively attended to. Self-toileting by the children was encouraged. The staff members were observed to assist where required each of the children when hand washing and hand drying, and the children were supported and encouraged prior to eating and post toileting.
- Nappy changing was carried out in a discreet manner in the nappy changing room located beside the creche. The children had spare clothes for use in the case of emergencies or spillages.
- The children were observed to be suitably dressed when playing outdoors on day of inspection.
- There was ample clear floor space for the children to enjoy free play indoors and outdoors.

Supporting relationships around children:

- The mid-morning meal was observed to be a social occasion, as the children chatted freely in a relaxed environment and were offered appropriate assistance by the adults.
- During observed tabletop activities, the children were supported and encouraged by the staff, who acknowledged their efforts and achievements.
- It was observed on day of inspection that children were treated with a positive regard; only quiet tones were used, and good eye contact was made with the children during engagement.
- Staff members were observed sitting with the children during meals, assisting them with tabletop activities and comforting children that were feeling sad.
- The children were given ample opportunities to choose activities and given the option to enjoy outdoor play.

- Daily record books were manually maintained in the creche room so that the children’s parents and guardians would be kept up to date with meals that their children had eaten, sleep times taken and toileting. Additional information was also included such as activities enjoyed.
- At the time of the inspection the children were observed to enjoy the socialisation, songs and stories during circle time; and they were seen eagerly participating in the many gross motor skill activities in the outdoor play areas

Physical and Material Environment:

- Little Acorns operated from a purpose-built facility that provided two spacious playrooms. Both the creche and the pre-school room were suitably furnished with child sized tables and chairs that were clean and in a good state of repair.
- There were fixed and mobile display shelving units to encourage the children to choose their own play equipment and activities.
- Both rooms had designated rest areas which were suitably furnished.
- There was a wide range of books displayed in the rest areas to encourage quiet time.
- The preschool room was laid out in a thematic way with a wide range of fine motor skill equipment, pretend play items, arts and crafts and small construction blocks.
- Both playrooms were adequately resourced with a variety of play materials that were accessible to the children on low level shelving units, providing the children with choice in their chosen activities.
- There was an outdoor play area provided beside the premise The outdoor play area had a combination of an all-weather and cement surface.
- Walls of the service displayed family photographs, birthday charts and arts and crafts completed by the children for Valentines Day.
- Both the creche and the pre-school room had direct access to their own secured outdoor playgrounds with large, canopied areas that could be used during inclement weather or for outdoor classroom activities.
- The outdoor areas were well equipped with a wide range of gross, motor skill play materials such as slides, playhouses, tunnels, and climbing frames. Sensory water and sand tables were available to the children with a wide range of buckets and spades. Child friendly surfacing had been installed for the children’s safety and comfort.

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 children’s parents and guardians provided all food items, and the children had their own water bottle.
- Lunches were stored in snack boxes and the perishable foods were stored in the service fridge.
- Healthy, nutritious lunches were observed being eaten at the mid-morning snack such as sandwiches, rice cakes, rolls, yogurts, a selection of fruits and chopped and diced vegetables.
- A hot meal was provided and reheated for the lunch meal for the children attending part time.
- The service provided crockery and cutlery as required.

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:

- On the inspector’s arrival at the service, the main entrance door was found to have been secured and was maintained secure when not in use.
- There were no cleaning agents accessible to the children.
- The first aid box was appropriately stored and inaccessible to children.
- Water temperatures at the wash hand basins were thermostatically controlled, so as not to exceed 43°C. Recorded water temperatures in the wash hand basins in the children’s toilets and nappy changing areas were 29°C on day of inspection.
- There were no cables or trailing flexes within the children’s reach in the playrooms.
- The outdoor play area was adequately secured with a high metal fence and gates around both designated outdoor play areas.

Infection Control:

- Suitable handwashing facilities was available in the playroom, toilets and nappy changing facilities. Warm water, liquid soap and paper towels were in place.
- Handwashing by the children was observed before mid-morning snack and after toileting.
- Pedal operated bins were in place for the disposal of paper towels.
- The premises was maintained in a clean and hygienic condition and corresponding cleaning records were available.
- Tables were observed to be sanitised after snack time.
- The children's coats and bags were appropriately stored on wall hooks, above floor level.

Safe Sleep:

- Little Acorns provided a separate sleep room in the creche area. The room was furnished with 4 standard cots which were clean and well maintained.
- The cots were suitably spaced and away from the window.
- The cots had well fitted mattresses and cot sheets.
- The air temperature of the sleep room registered at 19.5 degree Celsius.
- No child was observed sleeping on day of inspection.
- The registered provided explained that each child was given clean bedding for each sleep and that cots were cleaned down after each use.
- For children over the age of 2 that required a sleep, mats and stackable beds were provided.
- Suitable rest areas had been developed in both the pre-school room and the creche. They were furnished with soft floor matting, washable cushions and low couches so that the children could opt out of scheduled activities if they so wish and relax.

Fire Safety:

- Fire exit doors were noted to be maintained free from any obstructions.

Outing:

- No outings were observed on day of inspection

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 registered provider did ensure that there were staff available at all times with appropriate first aid responder (FAR) training. The FAR certifications on file indicated that five staff members held current up to date training.

(2)

(a) The first aid boxes were safely stored out of children's reach in the service. The first aid boxes were stored in an easily accessible and conspicuous position on the premises

(b) The fully equipped first aid boxes were available at all times to adults if in the event that a child may require treatment.

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.
- (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 record of monthly fire drills carried out was available and indicated that the last fire drill took place on the 21/01/2025
 - (b) A record of the number, type and maintenance record of firefighting equipment was maintained. It was recorded that the fire equipment was last serviced in October 24 and the emergency fire alarm system was last tested and serviced in January 2025.
- (4)
- The fire evacuation procedure for the service which contained details in relation to the procedure to be followed in the event of a fire was displayed in the service.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The registered provider ensured the service was adequately insured, with insurance for a maximum of 30 children until 27/03/2025. The records detailed the category of service covered which was part time and sessional care, the name and address of the premises and details regarding public liability cover, fire, theft, buildings, and outings cover.