

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015LM024		
Name of Service:	Little Acorns Creche		
Address of Service:	Cluain Alainn, Carrigallen, Co. Leitrim		
Eircode:	H12 E364		
Name of Registered Provider:	Gerry Moran		
Service type:	Full Day, Sessional		
Date(s) of Inspection:	29/08/2025		
No of pre-school children:	AM	31	PM 33

Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, TUSLA Child & Family Agency, Markievicz House, Barrack St, Sligo, F91 XC84
Inspection undertaken by:	L Costello
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

The service is located on the outskirts of a town in a housing estate in county Leitrim. It consists of purpose-built building over two floors. The baby room, toddler room and junior preschool are located on the ground floor. The senior preschool is located on the first floor. The service also has a kitchen, sleep room and office on the ground floor. On the day of inspection, the junior preschool was not in operation.

Staffing

On the day of inspection there was 9 adults employed in the service. There was five adults working directly with the children on the day of the inspection with the person in charge supporting break cover. One adult who worked in the kitchen was on leave as well as one other adult who works directly with the preschool children. 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/ 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, 11, 20, 22, 23, 25 and 27. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 16 (j) (k). As a result, the scope of the inspection included rooms name room Baby, Toddler and Preschool.

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.

Additional Information

The registered provider received two opportunities to provide a response to the inspection report. A CAPA one was received on the 25 September 2025 and a CAPA two on the 7 October 2025.

Acknowledgments

The inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the 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
- (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) (b)

There was a person in charge and a person available to deputise as required.

(c)

A governance structure was in place with room leaders identified and childcare workers. All staff on discussion were aware of their roles and responsibilities.

(2) (a) (b)

All nine adults employed in the service as well as the registered providers file were reviewed. Seventeen written and verified past employer references were available and two written references from a source other than a past employer were available in respect of all ten adults.

(c)
Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for ten staff. However, the service did not adhere to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years. Please refer to the information outlined under regulation 23 of this report.

(d)
Two adults had international police vetting available as they had resided outside the state for a period of six consecutive months or more.

(4)
Eight adults had attained major awards in Early childhood care and education at level 5 or above on the national framework of qualifications, or qualifications deemed by the Department of Children, Disability and Equality (DCDE) to meet the regulatory requirement.

Non-Compliance Information

(2) (a) (b)
One adult did not have a second reference on file. On a review of the employment record, the employee had previous employment.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

In a written response the registered provider stated:

A second reference was received; in the future we will have two references on file for all adults.

Supporting documentation submitted

Reference submitted

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventive actions submitted by the Registered provider adequately address the non-compliance found on inspection. This regulation is now compliant.

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

(2)
In the baby room at approximately 10:08 one adult provided support to three children aged between one and two years of age.

Non-Compliance Information

(1)
The registered provider did not ensure that an adequate number of adults were working directly with the preschool children at all times as follows. On the morning of the unannounced inspection 5 adults worked directly with 31 children aged from 10 months to six years of age as outlined below. The person in charge worked in the office, kitchen and provided break cover for the childcare workers.

At 10:08 approximately the following ratios were observed:

- Toddler Room; Two adults worked directly with 11 preschool children. Four children were aged under 1 years of age, Four children aged between one and two years of age and three children aged three children aged two years of age. The correct ratio for children aged under one year is 1:3 and children between 1 to 2.5 years is 1:5.
- Preschool Room: Two adults worked directly with 17 children aged from 2 years to 6 years of age, the correct ratio for this age group is 1:8.

At 13:01 the following ratios were observed:

- Toddler Room; Two adults worked directly with 12 preschool children aged between 10 months and two years.
- Preschool room: Two adults worked with 18 children aged between 2 years to 6 years of age.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

In a written response the registered provider stated:

The Manager will ensure that staff child ratios in each room will be maintained at all times.

Supporting documentation submitted

Documentary evidence submitted.

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventive actions submitted by the registered provider adequately address the non-compliance found on inspection, this regulation is now compliant.

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;

(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.

(2) A registered provider shall ensure that-

(a) all documents and records relating to references and Garda and police vetting obtained under Regulation 9(2) are retained for a period of 5 years from the date on which the person to whom the document or record relates commences working in the service, and

(b) a record referred to in subparagraph (h), (j) or (k) of paragraph (1) is retained for a period of 2 years from the date on which the child to whom it relates ceases to attend the service, or in the case of a preschool service in a drop-in centre or of a temporary pre-school service, for a period of 2 years from the date on which the child attends 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

(1)

The registered provider ensured adequate records were made available in respect of the following:

- (a) the name, position, qualifications and experience of the person in charge and of every other employee, unpaid worker and contractor;
- (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;
- (k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.

(2) (a)

The registered provider demonstrated that all documents regarding garda vetting are maintained for a period of no less than five years.

(2) (b)

Records in relation to medication administration and accidents and incidents were maintained for a period of two years.

(3)

These records were available in the service on the day of inspection for review.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 20 – Facilities for rest and play

(1) Subject to this regulation, a registered provider shall ensure that-

- (a) having regard to the number of pre-school children attending the service, their respective ages and the amount of time they spend on the premises, there are adequate and suitable facilities for each child 19 to play indoors and, where required by these Regulations, outdoors, during the day, and
- (b) there are adequate and suitable facilities for a pre-school child to rest during the day, and in the case of an overnight pre-school service, during the day and the night.

Compliance Information

(1) (a) The service consisted of four playrooms, three of which were in use on the day of inspection. Each playroom is assigned for use by different age groups of children. There were adequate and suitable indoor play facilities available in each room for the age range of children attending. The rooms presented as bright and visually appealing spaces with an arrangement of play equipment. These included arts and crafts, construction, small world items, dress up props, play kitchen areas, library's, sensory tables, relaxing areas, problem solving toys and wide range of manipulate play resources. Open low level shelving units enabled all items to be readily accessible to the children and suitable sized tables and chairs were available for tabletop activities.

The baby and toddler room catered for children aged 10 months to 2.8 years contained two play areas, one specifically for younger babies. This area included soft floor matting, wall mounted toys, baskets with play items, dolls houses and floor mats. The second area catered for slightly older children who were more mobile and contained more clearly defined interest areas such as a kitchen area dress up area and a range of open shelving and low-level units containing small world toys, blocks, shape sorters and musical instruments. The preschool room on the first floor is designed for older children with clearly defined interest areas, including a home area with kitchen, dress up and resources, construction area, arts and crafts and low-level accessible shelving with puzzles and table top activities. Cosy areas with soft seating and a library.

(1) (b) There were two designated sleep rooms in the service, both located on the ground floor. The sleep room located to the front of the building had two standard cots. The second sleep room at the rear of the building had four standard cots. Stackable floor beds were available for children over two years of age. The room was

equipped darkened by use of blinds and curtains at sleep times, with viewing panes providing dimmed lighting to enable supervision of sleeping children.

- (2) (a) (b) There were three separate designated outdoor play areas, each one suitably fenced to provide safe play areas for children outdoors. There was a small area located directly of the baby and toddler room with an overhead canopy to allow the younger children access to the outdoors in all weathers. The second area contained a mud kitchen, swings and slides, climbing frames with a ground surface of soft bark. A third area with a ground surface of artificial grass was equipped with goal posts and climbing gyms to allow for gross motor skill development. A large storage shed contained a range of play items that could be brought to the areas for children's play including ride on toys, hoops, cones, balls and digging toys.

Non-Compliance Information

(1) (b)

A piece of foam was provided in the baby sleep room as a mattress in one cot for children under two years of age. This mattress did not provide evidence of meeting the EU safety standards therefore posing a risk to the preschool child.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action:

In a written response the registered provider stated:

A new mattress has been ordered for the cot. Staff will carry out weekly checks and risk assessment on all mattresses to maintain safety. Safety checks will be signed and dated.

Supporting documentation submitted

Invoice submitted

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventive measures submitted by the registered provider adequately address the non-compliance found on inspection. This regulation is now complaint and will be checked on next inspection.

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 registered provider ensured that adequate suitable and nutritious meals were available to the preschool children. Breakfast and all snacks were provided by home in line with the service healthy eating policy. Snacks observed on the day included yoghurts, variety of fruits, crackers and cheese, and a selection of sandwiches. The main meal of the day is prepared on site and on the day of inspection consisted of chicken, mash potato, peas and gravy for the baby and toddler room and chicken curry and rice for the preschool room. Extra portions were available as required.

Drinks of water were available to all children 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

General Safety:

- The main door was secure on the inspectors unannounced arrival to the service.
- Cleaning materials were stored out of reach of the preschool child.

Infection Control:

- Tables were observed to be cleaned prior to mealtimes and after messy play.

Administration of Medication:

- Medication was stored out of reach of the preschool child in clearly labelled packaging.
- On discussion with the adults in the service they appeared to have a knowledge of the medication policy

Safe Sleep:

- Six standard cots were provided for children under two years of age.
- Stackable floor beds were available for children over two years of age.

- Room temperatures recorded on the day were 20°C which is within the safe sleep room temperature guidance.

Fire Safety:

- Emergency evacuation doors were free from obstruction.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. Staff in the baby/toddler room were observed to place children into the highchairs without securing them using the harness provided resulting in a safety risk to the young child.
2. Infant formula was observed to be made up on site using the cooled sterilised water sent in from home. Infant formula should be made up with cold water as this poses a safety risk.
3. A baby was observed to be given a bottle while lying horizontally in a bouncer, once the inspector intervened and asked the staff member not to feed in this position as it is a choking risk, the staff member immediately held the baby in their arms to feed the bottle.
4. A cot was positioned beside an electric socket with no protector cover. As this socket was in easy access to a child, this could pose a safety risk.
5. Garda vetting was available for ten adults in the service. However, two of these vetting disclosures was not dated within the previous three years in adherence to with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice 'EYI-RN12.3 Renewal of Garda Vetting'.

Infection Control:

6. The nappy bin in the nappy changing room did not have the required foot pedal operated mechanism posing a risk of infection control.
7. The bin in the downstairs bathroom had a broken pedal resulting in a risk of cross infection as the lid had to be manually opened.
8. Hand hygiene was observed not to be completed by adults or children throughout nappy changes observed in the baby/toddler room. Thus, posing a risk of infection control.
9. Three mattresses in both baby sleep rooms did not have the required waterproof protector cover for infection control.

Administration of Medication:

10. A sample of medication records reviewed on the day of inspection did not have the required witness signature as per the service medication policy. This could pose a risk to the preschool child

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. This was discussed at a staff meeting and all staff are aware of the importance of ensuring the harness are in place. Posters have been put up to remind staff and the policy has been updated.
2. It states in the Parents Handbook that we do not store formula onsite, and the manager informed parent of same. The formula was returned to the parent immediately. Manager reminded staff of the policy and no formula will be stored onsite in the future.
3. The manager reminded the full staff team that it is not safe to feed a child while the child is lying horizontally in a bouncer as it is a choking risk and therefore is not acceptable. The policy states that staff must hold the child upright when they are feeding to avoid a choking risk. We reviewed feeding policy with all staff which states that children must be upright for feeding and babies under 12 months must be held.
4. The manager has checked that all sockets are covered with appropriate safety covers at all times. Staff will carry out safety checks of their rooms each morning an evening.
5. Garda vetting was applied for and received. Garda vetting will be renewed every three years.

Infection Control:

6. A new foot operated pedal bin has been purchased. This will be added to our check lists.
7. A new foot operated pedal bin has been purchased. This will be added to our check lists.
8. We discussed this with staff as the policy states that staff must wash their hands each time after changing a child's nappy.
9. New waterproof mattress protectors were purchased. These will be checked regularly.

Administration of Medication:

10. Medication amended to include a required witness signature and staff informed of the updated change.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

- (1) Staff meeting minutes submitted.
- (2) Policy submitted.
- (3) Staff meeting minutes submitted.

(4) Checklist submitted

(5) Garda vetting submitted.

Infection Control:

(6) Picture of pedal bin submitted.

(7) Picture of pedal bin submitted.

(8) Staff meeting minutes submitted.

(9) Invoice submitted.

Administration of Medication:

(10) Medication administration form submitted.

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventive actions submitted by the Registered provider adequately address the non-compliance. This regulation is now compliant.

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 ensured there was an adequate number of adults trained in first aid for children and available to the children at all times during operation of the service.

Non-Compliance Information

(2) (a) (b)

There was an inadequate number of in date first aid equipment for the number of children attending the service.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

In a written statement the registered provider stated:

The items purchased for the first aid box. Checked against the recommended contents of first aid box as listed in the QRF. The manager will review the first aid kit to ensure items are in date and there is a sufficient amount. This check will be done regularly

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence submitted

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventive actions submitted by the Registered provider adequately address the non-compliance found on inspection. This regulation is now compliant.

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

Supervision on the day was adequate. In the outdoors staff members were observed to work well together communicating where they were positioning themselves to ensure children were in view of an adult. At mealtimes staff were observed to assist the younger children with feeding and offer prompting to older children who were seated in close proximity.