

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015LM024
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Name of Service:	Little Acorns Creche
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Address of Service:	Cluain Alainn, Carrigallen, Co. Leitrim
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Eircode:	H12 E364
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Name of Registered Provider:	Gerry Moran
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Service type:	Full Day, Sessional
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Date(s) of Inspection:	26/09/2023
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No of pre-school children:	AM	33	PM	24
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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.

Staffing

On the day of inspection there was 11 adults employed in the service. There was six adults working directly with the children on the day of the inspection with the addition of one student on placement. One adult worked in the kitchen, one adult was on leave and two other adults who worked in a relief capacity were not on duty on the day of the inspection.

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. The inspections may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9, 11, 16, 19, 23, 25, 26, and 28 however, on inspection additional non-compliance which posed significant risk was identified under Regulation 29. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

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 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 designated person in charge and a named person to deputise as required.

(c)

There was a clear management structure within the service, with room leaders appointed to each care room.

2. (a) (b).

The records of 12 adults including the registered provider were reviewed.

Two written and verified past employer references or references from a reputable source, in the absence of a past employer, were available in respect of 11 adults employed in the service.

- (c)
A garda vetting disclosure was available for 11 adults employed in the service.
- (d) Police vetting was available for two adults who had lived outside the state for a period of six months or more as an adult.
- (4)
Seven adults had maintained major awards in early childhood care and education at level 5 on the national framework of qualifications, or qualifications deemed by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) to meet the regulatory requirement. One adult had a letter of exemption of qualification by the DCEDIY till 2023.

Non-Compliance Information

- (2) (c)
Garda vetting was not available for one adult. It is acknowledged that the vetting has been applied for and the adult does not directly work with children.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

- (2) (c). Garda vetting received on the 29.10.2023. Garda vetting will be received prior to employment for future employees.

Supporting documentation submitted

Documentary evidence submitted.

Summary Comment

The information received by the registered provider has been reviewed by the inspectorate and the non-compliances found on inspection have been resolved. 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

- (1) On the morning of the inspection there were 33 children attending the service being supervised directly by six adults.
- (2) The minimum ratio of adults to children were adhered to during the day.

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.

(4) A record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection on the premises by a parent or guardian of a child but only in respect of information concerning that child.

Compliance Information

(1) (a-k)

The registered provider provided evidence of the qualifications and experience of all employees. On the notice board that was accessible to parents, information in relation to the adult child ratios, the type of care provided, opening hours and fees was displayed. On the day of inspection the registered provider provided information in relation to the records of incidents and accidents and medication administration and consent to the inspector.

(3)

All records referred to in (1) were open to inspection by an authorised person.

(4)

Records referred to in (1) were open to inspection by a parent or guardian as evidenced by parental signature on incident accident forms and medication administration.

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

(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

Three care rooms were in operation on the day of inspection. The toddler and baby room, junior preschool and senior preschool. The senior preschool was situated on the first floor of the building and was well laid out with various materials and resources suitable to the age and stage of development of the children attending senior preschool. Interest areas included home corners, construction area, puzzles, and tabletop activities. The room was decorated with artwork that the senior preschool children had been working on. The curriculum focus for September was identity and belonging and there was a strong focus on family as evidenced by individuals' family trees and a large family tree on the wall that all children were contributing too. Circle time took place in a cosy area of the room, where the childcare worker encouraged children to participate in songs and storytelling. The children were observed to be learning various body parts and numbers through song.

The junior preschool located on the ground floor was a large room which was divided into various interest areas which allowed free movement of children from one activity to another. Interest areas included home corner and dress up, dolls and houses, cars and construction, building blocks and tabletop activities which were suitable to the age and stage of development of the children. The room was colourfully decorated, displaying the children's artwork.

Materials and resources in the baby and toddler room were age appropriate to the children using these rooms. Two rooms were available for use for this group with access through the nappy changing area. The babies and toddlers mixed together in the toddler room at mealtimes and then the under 12 months, moved to the baby room for free floor play and development with age-appropriate resources. Materials in the baby room included sensory wall, mirror wall, soft flooring to aid crawling and exploring of various toys and resources.

The toddler room was equipped with resources suitable to 12 months plus, with puzzles and table top activities, dolls and soft toys and sensory resources.

The care rooms on the ground floor provided direct access to the outdoor space which was divided into interest areas that were age specific. A covered area, sectioned by a white picket fence provided a secure place for the toddlers and babies to play with toys suitable to their age and development. Located beside this was two further play areas, secure with a wooden fence. The areas were separated by the different floor surfacing of Astro turf, wood chips and concrete. The outdoor area provided resources for development of gross motor skills with climbing frames, swings, and slides. An enclosed sand box area was provided and can be utilised in all weathers. There was free floor space which provided opportunity for children for balance bikes, trikes and cars.

The service provided meals for those children in full day care. Meals were cooked on site and on the day of inspection dinner consisted of pasta bolognese or potatoes and mince. Where children did not like the dinner, alternatives were offered, and seconds were given to children who requested it. Snacks are sent in from home and consist of fruit, sandwiches, and yoghurts. All perishable items are stored in the fridge in the kitchen or the upstairs preschool. In the baby and toddler room, food provision was observed to be child led. Breakfast was observed to take place at various times up till 10.30am, meeting the needs of the child. Those babies requiring formula milk were supported with milk prepared at home and sent to the service and stored in the fridge until required. Sleep was directed by the child, where staff responded to various cues and supported babies to sleep throughout the day. A more structured routine was in place for older children. Rest areas were provided in all care rooms in the form of soft seating and cushions.

While nappy changing was at structured times, staff were also seen to be responsive to the child's needs. A nappy change was observed by the inspector and observed to be in line with policy. Toileting was observed to be as required and children were encouraged to complete hand hygiene after using the toilet.

Staff members were observed to be kind and friendly with their interactions with the children. The children were observed to be happy and content in their company. The service made efforts to promote relationships in the service and family pictures were displayed. Communication with families took place with the use of a written journal for babies and verbal handovers for older children. A notice board at the entrance to the service displayed the ethos of the service gave parents information on the service and who was working in the centre. The service also used a text service and social media to keep parents up to date with information.

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 to the service was found to be secure upon the inspectors unannounced arrival to the service, which prevented persons from entering the service without authorisation and children leaving the service unsupervised.
- The perimeter of the building appeared to be secure with wooden fencing and a concrete wall.
- All Televisions were secured to surfaces to prevent risk of tumbling over.
- The kitchen was inaccessible to the preschool children.
- All cleaning products were stored on high shelving out of the reach of preschool children.

Infection Control:

- Adequate handwashing facilities were provided in the service with warm water, liquid soap and paper towels.
- All waste disposable bins were foot operated pedal bins.
- The materials and resources throughout the preschool were visibly clean, with daily cleaning schedules in place.
- The premises was observed to be maintained in a clean and hygienic condition.

Administration of Medication:

- There was no medication administered on the day of inspection.
- A review of medication administration records included the type of medication, reason for administration, dose, consent, and parents' signature.

Safe Sleep:

- There were two designated sleep rooms in the service providing five standard cots.
- Stackable beds were available for those children over two years of age.
- Sleep records were maintained to include the colour, position and breathing pattern of the sleeping child.
- Soft seating and matting were provided in each care room for children to rest or opt out of an activity.

Fire Safety:

- All fire doors were free of obstruction on the day of inspection.

- Fire evacuation notices were displayed in the care rooms.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. One highchair did not have the required safety harness in place to safeguard the child.
2. On the day of inspection, it was observed by the inspector that at dinner time in the baby and Toddler room, one child was placed in a highchair and the safety harness was not used to secure the child.
3. A baby walker was observed to be in use in the outdoor area. Baby walkers are prohibited in preschool services.
4. On the day of inspection water temperature measured in hand washing sink of the designated nappy changing area measured 55°C, which poses a risk of scalding

Infection Control:

5. Two of the cots provided in the sleep room did not have the required waterproof cover.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. The harness was attached immediately, and staff have been informed to always have the straps secure.
2. At the staff meeting, the manager went through the importance of securing children in the high chairs. This will be discussed in all staff meetings.
3. The baby walker was removed from the service.
4. The temperature valve was reduced, and the water is now a safe temperature. Water temperature checks will be completed daily.

Infection Control:

5. New waterproof protectors were purchased.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

Documentary evidence submitted.

Summary Comment

The information submitted by the registered provider and the actions completed in the corrective and preventive form have been reviewed by the inspectorate and this regulation is now compliant and will be reviewed on next 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) Three adults employed in the service has been trained in first aid responder (FAR) and are available to the children attending the preschool service.

(2) (a)(b).

The registered provider has provided a suitably equipped first aid box that is safely stored in the hallway of the service and is available to all preschool children attending the service.

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-
- (a) a parent or guardian of a pre-school child attending or proposing to attend the pre-school service,
 - (b) an employee, and
 - (c) an authorised person.
- (3) A registered provider shall ensure that a record referred to in paragraph (2) is retained for a period of 5 years after its creation
- (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)

The registered provider has provided evidence of fire drills taking place in the service, the most recent fire drill occurring in 23.07.23. The service was closed in August.

(b).

The registered provider has provided evidence of the number and type of firefighting equipment and detection alarms in the service, with the most recent service date of the 13.04.2023.

(2) (c).

These records were made available for review by an authorised person on the day of the inspection.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

There was evidence of a current insurance cover valid until 27.03.2024. The insurance provided cover for 52 Children.