

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

<b>TUSLA Identifier:</b>	TU2015MO002
--------------------------	-------------

<b>Name of Service:</b>	Acorns Academy
-------------------------	----------------

<b>Address of Service:</b>	Manulla, Castlebar, Co. Mayo
----------------------------	------------------------------

<b>Eircode:</b>	F23 DP22
-----------------	----------

<b>Name of Registered Provider:</b>	Eileen McNeela
-------------------------------------	----------------

<b>Service type:</b>	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
----------------------	--------------------------------

<b>Date of Inspection:</b>	04/09/2023
----------------------------	------------

<b>No of pre-school children:</b>	AM	35	PM	22
-----------------------------------	----	----	----	----

<b>Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:</b>	Early Year's Inspectorate, TUSLA, Child and Family Agency, 2nd Floor, St. Mary's HQ., Castlebar, Co. Mayo.
<b>Inspection undertaken by:</b>	M Farrell
<b>Title:</b>	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).

<b>Conditions if applicable</b>	Not applicable
---------------------------------	----------------

### Description of service

Acorns Academy is located in a rural area in Manulla, County Mayo. The service is registered to provide full day care, part-time and sessional services to children aged between two and six years from 08:00-18:00hours. The service is registered to provide school aged childcare services. The service has three playrooms, a separate sleep room, a kitchen, office and sanitary facilities on the premises. An enclosed outdoor play area is provided for the children to the rear of the building.

### Staffing

At the time of the inspection there was 13 staff working in the service including the registered provider, 11 staff who worked directly with the children and a chef.

### 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, 15, 16, 19 and 23. 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 registered provider, deputy 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) The registered provider was the designated person in charge in the service and there was a named adult to deputise in her absence.
  - (b) The designated person in charge or deputy were available on the premise throughout the period of inspection.

(2)

The inspector was informed by staff that eight new staff had started working in the service since the last focused inspection of the 5 May 2021. The vetting information for the other five staff had been reviewed on previous inspections. The following vetting documentation and qualifications were available on file for the eight new staff members:

- (a) There were two written validated references from past employers in particular the most recent employers for seven staff members.
- (b) There was one written validated reference from a source other than a past employer for one staff member.
- (c) Vetting disclosures from the National Vetting Bureau of the Garda Síochána for eight staff.
- (d) International police vetting was available for required time frames for two staff members.

(4)

Evidence of the required qualification in Early Childhood Care and Education or equivalent was available on file for the six of the staff new to the service who worked directly with the children since the last inspection.

## Non-Compliance Information

(2)(a) A written reference from the most recent past employer was required for one staff member.

## Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

(2)(a)

The registered provider advised in a written response that:

### **Corrective and Preventive Action**

The staff member has updated their reference from their most recent employer.

References will be checked to ensure that all workers have two references from previous employers including their last place of work.

### **Supporting documentation submitted**

A copy of a reference.

## Summary Comment

The actions taken and evidence submitted by the registered provider has been reviewed by the Early Years Inspectorate and been found to have met the regulatory requirement.

## 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) There was an adequate number of adults working directly with the children on the day of the unannounced inspection with 7 staff working directly with the 35 preschool children present on the inspector's unannounced arrival to the service. 3 additional staff were present at various times in the day and worked directly with the children providing relief for breaks and additional support. The registered provider was also present in the service for a time during the inspection.
- (2) On the day of the inspection the registered provider ensured that the relevant minimum adult to children ratios were adhered to in the service. Attendance records showing that these ratios were always adhered to during the times sampled for review.
- (8) Review of the attendance records and discussion with staff found that there were at least two adults always present on the premises when children were present.

### 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.*

*(3) A record in writing referred to in paragraph (1) or (2) shall be open to inspection on the premises by-*

- (c) an authorised person.*

#### Compliance Information

(1)

A sample of 10 children's records were randomly selected for review from the children currently enrolled in the service. The following details were recorded on the sampled children's enrolment forms:

- (a) The names and date of birth of the children.
- (b) The date on which the child first attended the service.
- (c) Not applicable as all children were still attending the service.
- (d) The name, address and contact details for parents/guardians when the child was present in the service.
- (e) Details regarding authorisation for collection of the child.
- (f) Information regarding any illness, disability, allergy or special need of the child.
- (g) The name of the child's registered medical practitioner with the telephone numbers available in a separate location.

(i) Consent in writing from parents for appropriate medical treatment of the child in the event of an emergency

(3)

(c) The written records were made available for inspection to the inspector on request.

## Non-Compliance Information

(1)

(h) There was no information provided of the record of immunisation status of one of the children.

## Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

(1)(h)

The registered provider advised in a written response that:

### **Corrective and Preventive Action**

The immunisation status has now been updated on the child's file.

All child records will include a record of their immunisation status.

### **Supporting documentation submitted**

Written documentation submitted.

## Summary Comment

The actions taken and evidence submitted to the Early Years Inspectorate has addressed the regulatory non-compliance found on inspection.

### 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.*

#### Compliance Information

(1) The registered provider ensured written records were kept of the following information in the service:

- (a) The name, position, qualifications and experience of the staff members.
- (b) Information on the service types and ages of children that the service is registered to provide services to that was displayed on a wall in the service's entrance hallway.
- (c) Details of the adult to child ratios in the service.
- (d) Information on the type of care or programme provided in the service.
- (e) Details of the facilities available in the service.
- (f) Information regarding the service's hours of opening and fees that was displayed in the entrance hallway.
- (g) The service's policies, procedures and statements as required under Regulation 10 that were kept in a service policy folder in the office.
- (h) Details of the attendance of each pre-school child recorded daily in attendance books and/or an electronic application.

- (i) Details of the staff daily working hours on a staff roster.
- (j) A medication record book to record medication administration should it be required to be given to a child.
- (k) An accident and incident record book recording details of accidents and incidents that had occurred in the service.

### 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

- The children in the Preschool playroom were observed to eat food provided from home for their morning snack sitting in groups at tables. A warm meal of pasta, sausages, broccoli, sweetcorn and cucumber was provided by the service at dinnertime in addition to an afternoon snack of pancakes, fruit and cheese. Plastic plates and metal cutlery were used by the children to eat with at mealtimes. The children were supervised by the staff when eating who encouraged the children to chat and eat at their own pace without being rushed. Drink stations were set up in the playrooms at low levels with children's individual containers and bottles and drinking water was available to them at all times.
- The staff changed children's nappies at regular intervals in the nappy changing unit provided near the Playschool playroom. Children who were toilet trained were supported by the staff to use the toilet by themselves when they needed to with help provided by staff as needed.
- The children regularly washed their hands supervised and helped by the staff as needed for example before eating, after using the toilet and playing outdoors. Boxes of tissues were available at low levels and were observed to be used by a staff member in the Pre-preschool playroom to clean a child's nose when needed. A child playing at the water table outdoors was prompted by staff to put on a waterproof apron to protect their clothes. The inspection took place on a warm sunny day and suncream was applied to the children by the staff members at intervals.
- The children had access to rest areas with soft seating in the playrooms if they wished to rest/relax during the day. A designated quiet time was observed in the Preschool playroom during the afternoon where some

children relaxed but others were facilitated to play in another area of the playroom if they wanted to. Three younger children aged over two years slept/rested on stackable beds in the designated sleep room off the Playschool playroom supervised by staff.

- All of the children spent time playing outdoors in the enclosed outdoor area on the day enjoying play with ride on toys, climbing and balancing equipment. The children were allowed to move freely around the playrooms when playing indoors.
- Positive approaches to behaviour management were used by the staff who were warm in their approach and manner to the children. Staff took time to provide explanations to children for example in relation to why they should share toys and take turns.
- The staff were observed to be warm and friendly in their interactions with the children on the day using soft tones of voice when speaking with them. Children were comforted by the staff when they were upset or tired. The staff listened to the children and responded to their cues for example a child in the Playschool playroom who said they were tired was brought to the sleep room to rest.
- Parents of children starting in the service were facilitated to stay for a time in the playrooms with their children to assist the process of settling into the service. Keyworker systems were in place for example in the Preschool room with a named staff member assigned to each child to assist the formation of closer relationships between the children and staff.
- An electronic application was being introduced in the service which would provide information to parents. An instant messaging system was also used by staff to communicate with parents. The staff in the Playschool playroom showed the inspector examples of individual journals that were kept for each child with written observations and photographs recording children's activities. The staff told the inspector that these journals were sent home regularly for parents to review.
- The staff had created family walls in the playrooms with photographs of the children and their families creating links between the service and home.
- The staff members worked as a team and linked in with each other regularly to organise and co-ordinate activities and breaks allowing transitions to progress smoothly in the playrooms.
- There were three playrooms in the service named the Preschool playroom, Pre-preschool playroom and the Playschool playroom that catered for the youngest children in the service aged from two to three years of age. The playrooms were resourced with a range of toys and equipment suitable for the age ranges of the children which were arranged in defined interest areas such as home corners and transport areas. Open low levels storage systems were used to display the play equipment allowing the children to easily access the toys of

their choosing. Age-appropriate books to support language development were provided in each room near rest areas with soft seating. The children had access indoors to messy play activities for example sand tables in the Preschool and Playschool playrooms. Selections of tabletop activities available in the playrooms including jigsaw puzzles and linking activities prompted the development of children's fine motor skills.

- Tables waist high to the children and chairs were provided and arranged to facilitate groupwork and mealtimes.
- The outdoor area that was directly accessible from all the playrooms provided a change of environment from the playroom during the day. A sheltered area had been constructed in one area providing shelter allowing the space to be used by the children in bad weather. The walls enclosing the outdoor space and wooden furniture had been brightly painted creating an attractive place to play. There were sections of artificial grass, cement paths, wooden deck and dark impact absorbent tiles used as ground cover. Some children played on ride on toys, climbed on the climbing equipment supervised closely by the staff and played on the slides and rocker toys. Other children threw plastic balls to each other, played at the water table and music wall. A section of the outdoor space had been fenced off with a low fence and developed into a mud kitchen play area with wooden outdoor equipment and metal utensils and wood bark ground cover.

### 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 secured on the inspector's unannounced arrival to the service with a bell system in place to gain entry. The inspector was admitted by staff following production of identification documents. The external doors to the premises were secured throughout the inspection. The outdoor area was secured to prevent children from leaving and people from entering the space without authorisation by staff members. Cleaning products were stored out of reach of the children. The kitchen area was inaccessible to the children. The toys and play equipment in use was in satisfactory condition and suitable for the age and developmental stage of the children using it on the day.

##### Infection Control:

The staff were observed to prompt to and supervise the children washing their hands at key times including before eating, after playing outdoors and using the toilet. Paper towel and liquid soap was used for hand washing and drying with foot pedal operated bins provided in all areas for disposal of waste. The nappy change area had an adjustable height changing table, foot pedal operated waste bins to dispose nappies, aprons and gloves to facilitate nappy changes. The children's snacks that included perishable items such as yoghurts and ham were stored in refrigerators under the required 5°C.

##### Administration of Medication:

The staff informed the inspector that there were no children in attendance in the service that required medication to be administered to them. Temperature lowering medicines were stored in the office for use if needed.

##### Safe Sleep

The service catered for children aged over two years of age and stackable beds were provided for children to rest on in a separate sleep room beside the playschool playroom. After dinner on the day, three children rested/slept on stackable beds supervised by two staff members. Written records were kept by the staff on observations of the children of their colour, position, breathing and if they were awake or asleep at ten-minute intervals. The air temperature of the sleep room was recorded by staff and was 21.7°C when measured by the inspector at 14:00hours. Bed linen was laundered regularly in the service as needed.

##### Fire Safety:

The emergency exits were observed to be free from obstruction during the inspection.

#### Non-Compliance Information

### General Safety:

1. A blind cord in the sleep room was unsecured. It is acknowledged that evidence was submitted to the Early Years Inspectorate following the inspection on the day to show that the blind cord had been secured.
2. A child in the Preschool playroom ate whole grapes provided from home. It is acknowledged that when this was brought to the attention of the staff by the inspector that steps were taken to cut up the grapes.
3. Skin creams were stored in the window of the child sanitary unit off the Pre-preschool playroom and potentially accessible to the children.

### Infection Control:

4. The sink used for waterplay in the Preschool playroom required cleaning.
5. Sweeping brushes and pans were stored in the playrooms and one child was observed to pick up a sweeping brush in one of the playrooms and swing it around.
6. The water in the sinks in the nappy change area, children's sanitary areas used by the Playschool and Preschool playrooms and the staff sanitary unit's was not warm ranging from 17.2 to 18.5°C.

### Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The registered provider has advised in a written response that:

#### Corrective & Preventive Action

### General Safety:

1. The blind cord has been secured. In future all blind cords will be secured after painting works are completed.
2. Grapes will always be cut up for children. The service has sent a text to parents to please make sure to cut up grapes and blueberries as they are a choking hazard. A poster is also on display on the service's notice board to remind parents.
3. Skin creams are now stored in the locker in the Preschool room. Children's skin creams will be stored out of children's reach and out of sunlight.

### Infection Control:

4. The sink in the Preschool room has been cleaned. It was blocked with sand, and this has been addressed. The staff will make sure the sink is always cleaned before they leave work.
5. Sweeping brushes and pans were removed from the rooms.
6. All water temperatures are now reading between 38-43°C. The water temperature will be checked regularly on a weekly basis by staff to make sure the temperatures are correct and not above 43°C.

## **Supporting documentation submitted**

The registered provider submitted photographic evidence of actions taken to the Early Years Inspectorate.

## **Summary Comment**

The actions taken and evidence submitted by the registered provider has been reviewed by the Early Years Inspectorate and found to have addressed the non-compliances found under this regulation on inspection.