

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015MO068		
Name of Service:	The Little Acorns Children's Centre		
Address of Service:	Treanrevagh, Brickens, Claremorris, Co. Mayo		
Eircode:	F12 DX49		
Name of Registered Provider:	Eugene Waldron		
Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional		
Date of Inspection:	19/03/2024		
No of pre-school children:	AM	50	PM 47
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Year's Inspectorate, TUSLA, Child and Family Agency, 2nd Floor, St. Mary's HQ., Castlebar, Co. Mayo.		
Inspection undertaken by:	M Farrell		
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 Little Acorns Children’s Centre is located in Brickens in County Mayo. The service is registered to provide full day care, parttime and sessional service to children aged between 0 and 6 years of age. The service is registered to open between 07:30 and 18:00 hours but at present opens from 8:00am due to demand. The premises is a purpose built, detached, single storey building with four care rooms, a sleep room, office, kitchen and ancillary areas. School age services are also provided by the service. The children have access from the care rooms to enclosed outdoor play areas with play equipment.

Staffing

At present there are fifteen staff including a manager and childcare workers employed in the service and there are two adult students on educational placement. The registered provider is not involved in the direct day to day operation of 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. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under sections of regulations 9, 11, 15, 23, 25, 26 and 28. 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.*

(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 designated person in charge in the service and a named person to deputise as required in her absence.
 - (b) The designated person in charge or deputy were available on the premises throughout the period of the unannounced inspection.
- (2)
- (a),(b),(c) and (d)
- The inspector was informed by the staff that that there were 15 staff and 2 adult students in the service at the time of the inspection. It was confirmed that the vetting documentation for 13 staff had been reviewed during previous inspection in the service and were found to be compliant under this regulation. The following vetting documentation and qualifications were available for the four adults new to the service since the last focused inspection of the 20 January 2023:
- (a) Two written validated references from past employers including their most recent employer for the four adults.
 - (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all 17 adults. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
- (4)
- The qualifications for the staff new to the service who worked directly with preschool children met the requirements of this regulation.

Non-Compliance Information

- (2) (d) There was a gap in the experience/employment history record for one adult and it was unable to be confirmed if international police vetting was required for this period of time.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The service advised in writing that:

Corrective and Preventive Action

(2) (d) The employment history has been updated for the adult in question and their curriculum vitae does not contain any gaps. The adult does not require international police vetting.

In future the service will ensure proper checking of all curriculum vitae to make sure there are no gaps in information.

Supporting documentation submitted

The service submitted a copy of the updated employment history to the Early Years Inspectorate.

Summary Comment

The non-compliance found on inspection has been addressed by the actions taken and evidence submitted by the service.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 11 - Staffing levels

(1) Subject to this Regulation, a registered provider shall ensure that there is at all times an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the pre-school service.

(2) Subject to paragraphs (4) and (5), a registered provider of a full day care service or a part-time day care service shall ensure that at all times the minimum ratio of adults to children specified in column (3) of Part 1 of Schedule 6 opposite a particular reference number specified in column (1) of that Part in respect of the age range of the children specified in column (2) thereof at that reference number is satisfied.

(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) On the inspector's unannounced arrival to the service there were 9 adults working directly with 50 children in the service with an additional staff member arriving at 10:30am. The deputy designated person in charge also provided direct care to children during the day. A review of a sample of attendance records showed that an adequate number of adults worked directly with the children during service hours of operation.
- (2) The minimum adult to child ratios were provided on the day of the unannounced inspection in accordance with the required ratios considering the ages of the children and the length of time each child spent in the service as outlined below:
- Baby room: Two to three staff cared for six children under one year of age and two children aged over two years.
- Toddler room: Two staff cared for six children aged between two and three years of age.
- Junior ECCE room: Two staff cared for twenty children aged three years of age in the morning and for nineteen children during the afternoon.
- Senior ECCE room: Three staff cared for 16 children aged 4 years and over in the morning and 14 children in the afternoon.
- (8)(a) There were more than two adults always present during the unannounced inspection. The attendance records and staff rosters reviewed showed that at least two adults were present in the service at all times during opening hours.

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)

The inspector reviewed a sample of ten children's records selected across the four care rooms from the children attending the service.

(a) to (i)

The records were compliant with the required details as laid out under the regulation.

(3)

(c)

The children's records were made available to the inspectors by the staff on request.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 23 - Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child

A registered provider shall ensure that all reasonable measures are taken to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of a pre-school child attending the service and that the environment of the service is safe.

Compliance Information

General Safety:

The external entrance doors were secured during the inspection allowing staff to control access to the service.

The internal door between the kitchen and Toddler room had a securing device to control access to the area and prevent children from entering. There were securing devices in place securing blind cords at windows. Cleaning products were stored at high levels to prevent children from accessing them.

Sharp items such as scissors were stored at high levels restricting access by children without adult supervision.

The toys and play equipment were in satisfactory condition and suitable for the age and developmental stage of

the children using them during the inspection. The outdoor areas were securely enclosed. An oil tank was fenced off from one of the outdoor areas preventing children from accessing it. The mud kitchen area in the outdoor area used by the Senior ECCE room was not in use following a staff risk assessment and was awaiting repairs. Padding was in place on the supports of the shelter outdoors to reduce the risk of injury to children.

Infection Control:

The staff were observed to clean down tables and surfaces after use for example after mealtimes. Written records of the cleaning/disinfection processes carried out were kept by staff with outdoor equipment cleaning checklists available. The food provided from home for children's snacks was stored in refrigerators on the children's arrival to the service. Aprons and gloves were provided in nappy change areas and staff were observed to wear them during nappy changes. The children were prompted by staff to wash their hands with liquid soap and warm water and to dry them with paper towels for example after using the toilet. A window was opened in the Baby room nappy change area to ventilate the space.

Administration of Medication:

Records reviewed showed that the staff recorded the administration of medication to children with two staff members checking medication and parents signing the medication administration forms. Medication was stored out of reach of children according to manufacturer's instructions. Care plans involving medication administration were developed in consultation with parents and relevant health professionals where needed.

Safe Sleep:

A separate sleep room with standard cots was provided beside the Baby room for the younger children to sleep in. The air temperature of the sleep room was recorded at 17.4°C and was within the required range of 16°C to 20°C for a sleep room for children aged under one year. The staff recorded written observations of the sleeping children at 10-minute intervals including observations of their colour, breathing and positions. The air temperature of the sleep room was monitored and recorded by staff members. Cellular blankets or sleep bags were used by the sleeping children and laundered regularly. There was adequate space provided between the cots.

Fire Safety:

Emergency exit routes and doors were observed to be free from obstruction during the inspection.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. Amber beads were observed to be worn by a child in the Senior ECCE room which pose a potential choking/inhalation hazard to young children.

Infection Control:

2. The bins provided to dispose of nappies in the Baby and Junior ECCE room nappy changing areas were not the required foot pedal operated bins.
3. Children's coats and clothing were stored in open cubby holes in the Baby room nappy change unit posing a risk of cross contamination during nappy changes and therefore an infection control risk. This was also a non-compliance on the most recent inspection of the 20 January 2023.

Safe Sleep:

4. The covers on the cot mattresses in the Baby sleep room were not the required waterproof covers. Two of the cot mattresses covers were frayed with foam visible and required replacement.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The service advised in writing that:

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. Parent of the child has been informed children must not wear amber beads in the service. A policy on the wearing of amber beads while in the service has been drafted and is awaiting approval by the service's Board of Management.

Infection Control:

2. Foot operated pedal bin has been purchased for the Baby room. The Junior ECCE room have removed their bin as no child uses nappies. Nappy bins in the building will only be foot pedal operated.
3. Coats and clothing are now stored on pegs in the main corridor. New and existing staff will be informed that there can be no storage of coats/clothing in the nappy changing area. Use of the pegs either in the lobby or main corridor must be used to reduce the risk of cross contamination.

Safe Sleep:

4. 9 waterproof covers have been purchased with old covers removed and disposed of and a new cover put on the mattresses. All cot mattress covers will be waterproof, checked for wear and tear regularly and replaced when needed.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

1. Copy of the service policy relating to amber beads.

Infection Control:

2. and 3. photographic evidence of the bin and storage of coats.

Safe Sleep:

4. Invoices relating to the purchase of the mattress covers.

Summary Comment

The actions taken and evidence submitted by the service has been reviewed by the Early Years Inspectorate and deemed to have addressed the non-compliance found on inspection under the regulation.

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) Certificates were available in the service showing that four staff members held the required up to date First Aid Responder (FAR) training in first aid for children.
- (2)
 - (a) Suitably equipped first aid boxes were safely stored in easily accessible and conspicuous positions in the playrooms.
 - (b) The first aid supplies were available at all times if the children attending the pre-school service required them.

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-
- (c) an authorised person.
- (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) Records of the monthly fire drills undertaken in the service were kept by the staff with the last fire drill recorded as having been undertaken in February 2024.
- (b) Certificates of the maintenance of the firefighting equipment and the smoke alarms/fire detection system were made available by the designated person in charge for inspection. The smoke alarms/fire detection system had last been maintained on the 23 February 2024 and the firefighting equipment was last maintained on the 13 November 2023 according to the records provided.
- (2)
- (c) The records were made available to the inspector by the staff on request in the service.
- (4) Notices of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire were conspicuously displayed in the playrooms.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

There was a certificate of insurance displayed in the service hallway expiring on the 27 March 2024 covering the maximum number of children attending the service at the time of the inspection.