

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

**TUSLA Identifier:** TU2015OY010

**Name of Service:** Little Acorns

**Address of Service:** Moore Hall, O'Moore Street, Tullamore, Co. Offaly

**Eircode:** R35 V9K8

**Name of Registered Provider:** Anne Shanley

**Service type:** Sessional

**Date of Inspection:** 11/11/2025

**No of pre-school children:** AM 19 PM NA

**Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:** Early Years Inspectorate  
Child and Family Agency  
Primary Care Centre  
Church Avenue  
Tullamore  
Co Offaly

**Inspection undertaken by:** R Flynn

**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** Click or tap here to enter text.

### Description of service

Little Acorns is located on the lower ground floor of a commercial building in the town of Tullamore, Co Offaly. The services offered sessional care to children aged between 2-6 years. Little Acorns operates between 09.30am and 12.30pm, and 13:00pm to 16:00pm Monday to Friday. The service consists of one preschool room, a kitchen, and storage room. A small enclosed outdoor play area is located at the back of the premises at the entrance to the preschool.

### Staffing

The registered provider employs two staff to work in the service. Two staff members were present on the day of inspection, including the registered provider who works directly with the children. The registered provider facilitated the inspection on 11 November.

### 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 and safety. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

- Regulation 9(1)(a)(b), (2) (a)(b)(c), (4) – Management and recruitment,
- Regulation 10 – Policies
- Regulation 11 (1), (3) – Staffing levels,

- Regulation 19 (1)(a) – Health, welfare and development of child,
- Regulation 23 – Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child,
- Regulation 25(1),(2)(a)(b)– First aid,
- Regulation 26(1)(a)(b),(4)– Fire safety measures,
- Regulation 28 – Insurance.

On inspection additional non-compliance which posed a risk was identified under Regulation 15 - Record of Preschool child and Regulation 16 - Records in relation to pre-school service. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulation 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, 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.

(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 service had a designated person in charge and a named person to deputise.

(b) The person in charge remained on the premises for the duration of the inspection.

(2)

Three staff files including the file of the registered provider were reviewed and the following was noted:

(2)(a)

Four written validated references were available from a past employer.

(b)

Two written validated references were available from a source other than a previous employer.

(c)

A Garda Vetting disclosure was available in respect of the two staff members and the registered provider. The service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(4)

The staff members employed to provide direct care to the children attending the service held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education from Levels 5 to 8 on the National Framework of Qualifications.

## Part III – Management and Staff

### Regulation 10 - Policies, procedures etc. of pre-school service

*A registered provider of a pre-school service shall ensure that the written policies, procedures and statements specified in Schedule 5 are in place for the service.*

#### Compliance Information

The content of the following policies was reviewed and met the requirement of the regulations:

- Statement of Purpose and Function
- Policy on Managing Behaviour
- Healthy eating

#### Non-Compliance Information

The policy on Accidents and Incidents did not outline the measures to be taken to prevent accidents and incidents from occurring.

#### Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

##### **Corrective and Preventive Action**

The registered provider has updated their Accidents and Incidents Policy for the service. The policy will be adhered to, reviewed and updated as needed.

##### **Supporting documentation submitted**

The Accidents and Incidents policy was submitted to the inspectorate.

#### Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the corrective and preventive action taken and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 10 has been addressed.

### 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.*

*(3) Subject to paragraph (5), a registered provider of a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that at all times the minimum ratio of adults to children specified in column (3) of Part 2 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) therefore at that reference number is satisfied.*

#### Compliance Information

- (1)  
An adequate number of adults were working directly with the preschool children on the day of inspection.
- (3)  
The ratio of adults to children was maintained on the day of the inspection.  
There were eighteen children aged between 2 years and 11 months and 4 years being supervised directly by two adults.

### 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.*

## Compliance Information

(1)

A sample of twelve records were reviewed. The registered provider ensured that a record in writing was kept of the details relating to (a), (b), (c), (d), (h) and (i) in respect of the records reviewed.

## Non-Compliance Information

(e)

Two of the twelve records did not have information for the authorisation for the collection of the child.

(f)

The registered provider did not ensure that a health care plan was available in writing in respect of two pre-school children who required the provision of special care and attention.

(g)

One record did not have information regarding the child's medical practitioner.

## Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

### **Corrective and Preventive Action**

Children's registration forms were reviewed and updated with any outstanding information. Any child requiring a health care plan now has one on file. Care plans will be asked to be provided by parents before children start preschool so that staff are aware of children's needs and can provide this promptly. All children's registration forms will be double checked to ensure that details are correct.

### **Supporting documentation submitted**

Copy of care plan template received.

Copy of specific care plan for one child received.

## Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the corrective and preventive actions taken and evidence submitted. The non-compliances identified under Regulation 15 have been addressed.

### 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:*

*(k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.*

#### Non-Compliance Information

(1) (k)

A sample of fifteen accident and incident records were reviewed. The registered provider did not ensure that accident and injury records were signed by parents following an incident. None of the fifteen records were signed by a parent to confirm that they had been advised of an accident or incident.

#### Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

##### Corrective and Preventive Action

Staff have been informed that Accident and Incident forms needs to be signed by a parent. The registered provider will ensure that parent's get a signed copy of their child's accident/incident report. Staff have also been made aware of this for future reference.

#### Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the corrective and preventive actions taken and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 16 has been addressed.

### 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.*

#### Compliance Information

**(1) (a) Basic needs**

Children were observed eating a packed lunch provided by their parents. Lunches consisted of a variety of sandwiches, yoghurts, crackers, carrots and fruit. Staff sat with the children during snack time and engaged in conversation. Children had individual drink bottles available in their lunch bags. The children sat together at low level tables while eating and engaging in conversations with each other.

Self-toileting was supported, and children were supervised as necessary. Nappy changing facilities were available for any children who were not toilet trained.

### **Supporting relationships**

Children were spoken to using their first names and appropriate eye contact was made. Childrens artwork with photographs of the children were displayed in the preschool room. A birthday chart and height chart were also displayed on the wall.

Information and updates regarding the children's day to day activities and learning were provided to parents at drop off and collection times. Additional notices and updates were shared with parents via an electronic application. The service maintained books with the children's artwork and activities which are provided to parents at the end of the year.

### **Physical and material environment**

The service was laid out to accommodate the needs of the children attending the service. Low level tables and chairs were provided. Children were observed to freely select activities of their choice, such as puzzles and train tracks, from the shelves. Toys and equipment were positioned at an accessible level on open shelving which facilitated choice and encouraged spontaneous play. Areas which promoted role play were available such as a dress up area with a variety of costumes, a playhouse area, a doll area with changing mat and cots, and a play kitchen with equipment. A water and sand tray were stored in the hallway, with aprons and overalls available for messy play activities.

A range of books were available in the reading area of the preschool room. Children participated in activities such as building a train track, small world play with a farmhouse and toy animals and a group card game. Staff sat with the children at tables engaging with the children.

### 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 entrance door to the preschool was securely locked and controlled by staff to prevent children exiting the pre-school unsupervised and to prevent unauthorised access. A bell at the entrance door alerted staff to any visitors.

The service met the necessary safety requirements in respect of the indoor environment, toys and equipment and safe storage of cleaning agents. Cleaning products were stored in the kitchen, or up on high shelves, out of reach of the children.

The kitchen was inaccessible to children on the day of inspection.

##### Infection Control:

Liquid soap and warm water were available for hand washing. Paper hand towels were available in the wall mounted dispensers.

Pedal bins were available in the sanitary accommodation and preschool room for the hygienic disposal of waste such as soiled tissues. Mechanical ventilation was in place in the sanitary accommodation as well as openable windows. The care rooms were well-ventilated with openable windows.

##### Administration of Medication:

Medicine was not administered on the day of inspection; written parental consent was available should medication be required to be administered to a child.

##### Fire Safety:

The designated fire exits were observed to be unobstructed throughout the inspection. The fire assembly point was located in the car park of the service.

#### Non-Compliance Information

##### General Safety:

1. A child was observed to have whole grapes and popcorn for their lunch presenting a potential choking hazard. Staff did not take immediate action and cut the grapes in half and were notified by the inspector to cut the grapes.

2. Whole nuts were observed in a lunch box. This was at variance with the services policy on food which states that nuts are prohibited in the service.
3. Blind cords on all the windows in the preschool room were not secured. This presented a potential choking risk to a child.
4. One child was noted in their registration form to not like to sit while eating and was at risk of choking. There was no care plan or risk assessment available regarding actions put in place by the service to address this issue and keep the child safe. It is acknowledged that the child was observed sitting when eating on the day the inspection was held.

### Infection Control:

5. There was no fridge available in the preschool room for the storage of the children's perishable food snacks such as yoghurts.
6. Handwashing practices were inadequate to control the spread of infection as children's hands were not routinely washed. Children were not brought to wash their hands before eating meals and snacks.

### Administration of Medication:

7. An individual care plan was not available in respect of one child who carried emergency medication in their bag. This posed a risk of staff not being aware of the procedure to follow in the event that the medication was required to be administered and a medical emergency arose. The child's bag was stored in the hallway, presenting a risk of other children gaining access to the medication during times of walking independently to the sanitary accommodation.

### Action submitted by the Registered Provider

#### Corrective & Preventive Action

#### General Safety:

1. The updated Healthy Eating policy was provided to parents and also displayed at the entrance to the service. This policy informs parents which foods were not permitted in lunch boxes, including whole nuts, popcorn and whole uncut grapes.
2. Whole nuts are not permitted in the service; this has been reflected in the updated policy on healthy eating.
3. Blind cords have been secured.
4. Children's lunch boxes will be checked for any choking hazard foods and whole grapes will be cut in half by a staff member. Foods that are not permitted such as popcorn and nuts, will be placed back in the child's bag to be consumed at home. Staff sit with children when eating lunch. Care plans and/or risk

assessments will be implemented for any child who commences in the service and requires a specific care plan.

**Infection Control:**

5. Any perishable foods in children’s lunch boxes will be placed in the fridge in the kitchen.
6. Hand washing routines have been implemented.

**Administration of Medication:**

7. An individual care plan has been put in place for the child requiring specific medication. Staff have been made aware of this care plan and the procedure to follow in the event that the medication is required to be administered. The child’s bag is now stored on a high shelf in the hallway, inaccessible to children.

**Supporting documentation submitted**

**General Safety:**

Copy of Healthy Eating policy received.  
Photograph of secure blind cords received.

**Administration of Medication:**

Copy of care plan received.

**Summary Comment**

The inspector has reviewed the corrective and preventive actions taken and evidence submitted. The non-compliances identified under Regulation 23 have been addressed.

**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)

Two staff members were qualified in First Aid response (FAR) and available on the premises for the hours of operation.

(2)(a)

Suitably equipped first aid boxes were located in the preschool room.

(b)

First aid boxes were accessible to adults caring for children in 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.*

*(4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of fire shall be displayed in a conspicuous position in the premises.*

#### Compliance Information

(1)(a)

A written record for the completed monthly fire drills was available on the premises. The last fire drill was recorded as taking place on 04 November 2025.

(b)

A record was available demonstrating the number and type of the firefighting equipment. The fire fighting equipment was serviced on 10 October 25.

(4)

A notice of the procedure to be followed in the event of a fire were positioned at doorways throughout the service.

#### Non-Compliance Information

(1) (b)

The smoke detection system had not been serviced within the required timeframe. The last recorded record of maintenance was dated 11 October 2023.

#### Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

##### Corrective and Preventive Action

The smoke detection system was serviced on the 11 December 2025.

##### Supporting documentation submitted

Copy of certification of service received.

## Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the corrective and preventive action taken and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 26 has been addressed.

## 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 current insurance cover for 22 children attending the service and the expiry date noted was 27 March 2026.