

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015WX068
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Name of Service:	Little Acorns Montessori
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Address of Service:	Ballyduff, Camolin, Co. Wexford
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Eircode:	Y21 Y439
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Name of Registered Provider:	Jennifer Doyle
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Service type:	Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	16/01/2024
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No of pre-school children:	AM	16	PM	N/A
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspector Tusla Child and Family Agency Ely Hospital, Ferrybank Wexford.
Inspection undertaken by:	C. Ryan
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

Little Acorns Montessori is a privately operated preschool service which opened in 2009. It is located in a rural community between the villages of Camolin and Ferns, Co Wexford. It offers a Montessori programme to children aged 2 years to 6 years of age. The service operates a sessional service from 9.30am to 12.30pm from a purpose-built premises adjacent to the registered provider's home. The building consists of an entrance hall, storage, a playroom and toilets. An outdoor area directly behind the preschool building was available which was secured by a wall and fence.

Staffing

There were two staff employed to work directly with the preschool children in the service, which includes the registered provider. All staff working directly with the children attending the service held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at the minimum Level 5 and above on the National Qualifications Framework.

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/ premises and facilities. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

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, 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)(b)

On the day of the inspection the registered provider was the designated person in charge and remained on the premises for the remainder of the inspection.

(2)

The staff files for the registered provider and second staff member working directly with children were reviewed on the day.

(a)(b)

Validated references for all employees were kept in each staff member's file.

(c)

Garda vetting disclosures were available for all staff working in the service.

(d)

Police vetting was not required as none of the staff had lived outside the state for more than six consecutive months.

(4)

Certificates of qualifications for all staff members working directly with the preschool children were available on file.

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)(2)

Throughout the period of the inspection there were adequate numbers of staff working directly with the children attending the service. During the morning there were 16 children being directly cared for by 2 staff.

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

Children enjoyed free play during the morning, choosing what they wished to play with from the open shelves. The staff moved around the room and engaged in play and conversations with the children in small groups and with individual children.

Parents supplied lunches which were stored in the fridge. The snack time was relaxed and unhurried. The staff sat with them, and they talked about their day and shared news. The children were settled and familiar with the daily routine. They put away their lunch boxes, went and picked a toy or activity to play with on floor mats such as cars, colouring, magnetic connectors and blocks. The transitions between activities were calm with only gentle prompting. Children had access to a variety of toys and materials such as Montessori materials, library area, home corner, and black board. The children enjoyed circle time and stories during the morning. Children were observed to independently use the toilet during the morning.

Outside the play area had been extended and now included a spacious grassy area, new sand pit, kitchen and large climbing frame with slides and swings. Children had wellies and wet gear for the outdoor play.

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

Infection Control:

The playroom was clean and well maintained. There was liquid hand soap and hand towels available in the toilets.

Non-Compliance Information

Infection Control:

1. There was no warm water available for hygienic hand washing.
2. The toilet doors were propped open which increases the risk of cross contamination.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

Infection Control:

1. A new water heater was purchased.
2. The doors will no longer be propped open.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photograph of bathroom door, and receipt and photograph of water heater.

Summary Comment

The requirement of the regulation is met.

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)

There were staff trained in first aid for children available to the children attending the preschool service.

(2)(a)(b)

There was a suitably equipped first aid box stored in an easily accessible position and was available for use.

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 firefighting 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)

Monthly fire drills were carried out in the service. The last recorded fire drill was carried out on the 8 December 2023.

(1)(b)

A record was maintained of when the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms were serviced. The last maintenance carried out in the service was recorded as having taken place in February 2023.

(4)
There was a notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of fire displayed in a conspicuous position in the hallway of the service.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Non-Compliance Information

There was no insurance in place on the day of inspection. The insurance had expired in November 2023. It is acknowledged that the registered provider took immediate actions to address this, and insurance was in place before the end of the inspection.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The insurance company was contacted immediately, and the insurance was renewed.

Supporting documentation submitted

Certificate of insurance.

Summary Comment

The requirement of the regulation is met.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 30 - Minimum space requirements

(1) Subject to paragraphs (2) to (6), a registered provider shall ensure that adequate clear floor space is available in the premises for the work, play and movement of children attending the pre-school service.

(3) A registered provider of a sessional pre-school service or a pre-school service in a drop-in centre shall ensure that a minimum of 1.818 square metres of clear floor space is available for each child attending the service.

Compliance Information

(1)(3)

The playroom was measured on the day of inspection. The room measured at 39m² and had sufficient space to accommodate the number of children who were attending for a sessional service.