

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

<b>TUSLA Identifier:</b>	TU2016DL006		
<b>Name of Service:</b>	Little Acorns Montessori Playschool		
<b>Address of Service:</b>	7 Rockfield Terrace, Buncrana, Co. Donegal		
<b>Eircode:</b>	F93 V067		
<b>Name of Registered Provider:</b>	Jennifer Grant, Sarah Quigley-Burns		
<b>Service type:</b>	Full Day, Sessional		
<b>Date(s) of Inspection:</b>	18/11/2025		
<b>No of pre-school children:</b>	AM	32	PM 23
<b>Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:</b>	Early Years Inspectorate, TUSLA Child & Family Agency, Markievicz House, Barrack St, Sligo, F91 XC84		
<b>Inspection undertaken by:</b>	K Folan		
<b>Title:</b>	Early Years Inspector(s)		
<b>Authority to Inspect</b>			
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

Little Acorns Montessori Playschool is a privately owned Early years' service operated by two registered providers in Buncrana, Co. Donegal. The service is registered to provide sessional and full day care to children aged 2 to 6 years of age. The service is open from 08:00-18:00 each day which includes a sessional service from 09:30-12:30. The premises consists of semidetached two-story building which has been adapted for the provision of an early years' service. The building contains two playrooms, room 1 on the ground floor and room 2 on the first floor. The building also contains sanitary accommodation for children and staff, a nappy changing room and a staff kitchen area. A fully enclosed outdoor area is available to the side and the back of the building. There is no school age service on site.

### Staffing

The registered providers do not work in the service on a daily basis. Seven adults are employed in the service, including a manager who oversees the day to day running of the service. Of those adults, six work directly with the children and including two relief staff who provide cover in the event of staff absences. On the day of the inspection three students were present in 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 *announced/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(s) wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the *registered provider, 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) The registered provider ensured that:

- (a) There was a designated person in charge and a named adult to deputise in their absence.
- (b) The designated person in charge was available on the premises throughout the period of inspection.

(2) On the morning and afternoon of the inspection, eight adults in total were present including five adults who worked directly with the children, the manager who does not directly work with the children, and two students.

On the most recent inspection dated the 26 October 2022, six staff files were reviewed and satisfactory.

It was advised by the manager one new staff member, and three students had commenced in the service since the inspection conducted on 26 October 2022. In addition, Garda vetting for all staff members whose disclosures were identified as due for renewal were requested for review.

Four staff files were reviewed, and the following information was available:

- (a) Four written validated references from past employers for three of the adults.
- (b) Four written validated reference from reputable sources for three of the adults.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all adults. However, the service did not adhere to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years. Please refer to the information outlined under regulation 23 of this report.

(4) Two of the adult files reviewed, evidenced they held a major award at level 5 or above in early childhood care and education on the national qualification framework, or qualifications deemed by the Department of Children, Disability and Equality (DCDE) to meet 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.*

#### Compliance Information

(1)  
On the day of inspection, there was an adequate number of adults working directly with the preschool children attending the service.

(2)

- On the morning of the inspection:  
In Room 1: Two adults cared for 13 children aged between 3 years to 3 years and 10 months.  
In Room 2: Two adults cared for 19 children aged between 3 years and 11 months to 4 years and 10 months.
- In the afternoon:  
In Room 1: Two adults cared for 15 children aged between 3 years to 4 years.  
In Room 2: Two adults cared for 8 children aged between 3 years and 11 months and 4 years and 10 months.

### 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

(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

(1)(a)(b)

##### Basic need

- The service has a healthy eating policy in place. The service provides snacks for the morning and afternoon, which on the day of inspection was pancakes, bananas, orange and cucumber. Parents provide the main meal from home, which is stored safely in a refrigerator. Staff reheat the meal and record the reheating temperatures.
- Drinks which the children bring from home are available to them throughout the sessions.
- The service has a key worker system in place with each staff member assigned responsibility for a group of children.
- Children were supported to use the toilet independently with assistance given to those who required it.
- The day of the inspection was cold, staff ensured all children had suitable thermal suits, hats and outdoor footwear before going outdoors.
- On the day of the inspection the children accessed the outdoor environment for a large part of the morning, with opportunity for children from both rooms to mix and socialise together. The children were observed energetically using ride on toys, digging in the garden area and using the outdoor wooden playhouse for imaginary play.

##### Supporting relationships

- Staff communicated with each other throughout the morning and afternoon sessions in relation to the children's needs and activities.

- Communication with parents took place verbally at pick up and drop off times and a software application is used to send parents pictures and updates in relation to their child's day and development.
- The inspector observed staff speaking kindly to the children, praising positive behaviours and spending time speaking to each child during the day.
- The children spent time in small group activities such as story time and outdoors with children freely moving around the area, choosing their preferred activity.

### Physical and Material environment

- In room 1, play equipment such as magnet tiles, music toys, plastic bricks, water toys, train sets and Montessori equipment was organised in boxes for the children to access. The walls were decorated with pictures of the children's families. A kitchen, doll house and figurines were available to the children.
- In room 2, a large variety of resources were available to the children such as a construction area, vehicle area, a tool bench, art and craft area and small word figures. Themed materials were neatly stored in boxes for the children such as space themed toys, role play materials, puppets, sensory toys. The room was decorated with educational posters about the galaxy, a world map and pictures of the children's families.

### Non-Compliance Information

- In room 1, the dress up materials were stored on a shelf on top of each other making it difficult for children access.
- In room 1, the rest area was insufficient for the number of children aged 2-6 in full day care, containing a large floor mat and two cushions. It is acknowledged that stackable floor beds are available in the service should a child require a sleep.
- In room 1, the book area contained 5 books, with some torn magazines. This is insufficient for the number of children in the room.

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

#### Corrective and Preventive Action

The registered provider responded:

- 1.Coat hooks attached to the dress up area wall.
2. Floor mat removed and replaced with a clean one. More cushions, blankets and teddies added.
3. Old books thrown out and new books added.

Staff will reset areas throughout the day and change books weekly.

### **Supporting documentation submitted**

1. Photographic evidence provided.
2. Photographic evidence provided.
3. Photographic evidence provided.

### **Summary Comment**

The corrective and preventive actions submitted by the registered provider adequately address the non-compliance found on inspection. This regulation is now compliant.

## 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 secure on the inspector's arrival, preventing unauthorised access to the service by an adult or a child leaving the service unsupervised.
- The internal doors in the service were secure, with a stairgate fitted at the top of the stairs.
- The outdoor perimeter was secure with waste bins out of reach of children.
- Cleaning materials were stored out of children's reach.
- Blind cords were secured to the wall.
- Emergency exit doors were unobstructed.
- Ventilation in the main playroom and sanitary accommodation was by means of openable windows.
- The temperature of the service on the day of the inspection was 19°C which is within the required range.
- Handrails were provided on stairs.

## Infection Control:

- Aprons and gloves were used during nappy changing time and adults and children demonstrated correct handwashing procedures.
- Tables were wiped down after snack time.

## Administration of Medication:

- No medicine was administered on the day of inspection. Records for previously administered medicine were available for review. On discussion with the staff, they were familiar with the correct procedures to safely administer medication when required.

## Non-Compliance Information

### General Safety:

- Garda Vetting was available for one staff member. However, this vetting disclosure was not dated within the previous three years in adherence with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice 'EYI-RN12.3 Renewal of Garda Vetting.
- In the nappy changing area, a broken piece of equipment awaiting repair was stored, posing a trip and fall hazard to the children.
- Items such as packets of toilet tissue were stored on the floor beside the steps, posing a trip and fall hazard to children.
- In room 1, the protective cap on the radiator was missing, exposing a sharp point, posing a risk of injury to the preschool child.

### Infection Control:

- Warm water liquid soap and paper towels were provided for hygienic handwashing, however the handtowels in the sanitary accommodation including the nappy changing area were not stored in an appropriate dispenser.
- The floor mat and cushions in the cosy area in room 1 were discoloured and in need of a deep clean.
- In the sanitary accommodation for room 2, a swing top bin was present for the disposal of waste. Foot pedal operated bin is required for the safe disposal of waste, to prevent cross contamination.

### Action submitted by the Registered Provider

#### Corrective & Preventive Action

##### General Safety:

1. Garda Vetting was renewed
2. Equipment removed from area.
3. Toilet tissue stored on high shelf.
4. Protective cap replaced on radiator.

##### Infection Control:

5. Hand towels dispenser installed.
6. Mat replaced with a new clean mat.
7. Bin in bathroom replaced with foot operated pedal bin.

#### Supporting documentation submitted

##### General Safety:

1. Documentary evidence submitted.
2. Photographic evidence submitted.
3. Photographic evidence submitted.
4. Photographic evidence submitted.

##### Infection Control:

5. Photographic evidence submitted
6. Photographic evidence submitted
7. Photographic evidence submitted.

### Summary Comment

The corrective and preventative actions submitted by the registered provider adequately address the non-compliance found on inspection. This regulation is now compliant.

### 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 staff in the service were trained in first aid for children. At least one trained member of staff was available to the children at all times.

(2)(a)(b) There was a suitably equipped first aid box available in each care room in the service. Each first aid box was stored in an easily accessible position.

### 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.*

*(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 record of fire drills carried out in the service was available with the most recent fire drill carried out on in October 2025.

(1)(b) Records were available to evidence that the firefighting equipment was last serviced in August 2025 and smoke alarms were serviced on 22 April 2025.

(2)(c) The records were made available to the inspector.

(4) Fire evacuation procedures were displayed in the service.

## 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 the 27 March 2026. The insurance provided cover for 41 children in full day care.