

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier: TU2019DL001

Name of Service: Little Acorns Nursery

Address of Service: 1 Castle Avenue, Buncrana, Co. Donegal

Eircode: F93 F2W7

Name of Registered Provider: Jennifer Grant

Service type: Full Day

Date of Inspection: 12/02/2025

No of pre-school children:	AM	10	PM	8

Address of the Early Years Inspectorate: Tusla Early Years Inspectorate,
2nd Floor, St. Conal's Campus,
Letterkenny,
Co. Donegal. F95 XK94

Inspection undertaken by: N. McEndoo.

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

Description of service

Little Acorns Nursery is an established early years' service situated within the town of Buncrana in north county Donegal. The service is registered to provide full day care for children aged from 6 months to 2½ years operating weekdays between 7am to 7pm. The service occupies a former domestic semi-detached two-storey dwelling which has been converted to provide a childcare facility. The building houses two playrooms, the Baby room at ground floor and the Toddler playroom on the first floor. A separate sleep room, kitchen and office are also provided. There is a large outdoor play area accessible to the rear of the building for use by the toddlers, and a small area to the front for use by the babies.

Staffing

A total of seven adults were present in the service at the time of inspection. This included five adults who provided direct childcare, the manager who provided relief for staff lunch breaks and the registered provider.

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 and health, welfare and development of child, safety, premises and facilities. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required. The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9, 11, 10, 15, 22, 23, and 27.

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, 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.
- (c) There was 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.

(2)

On the day of inspection, eight adults were employed; the manager and seven adults who worked directly with the children. One adults file had previously been reviewed.

The following vetting information was available for seven adults:

- (a) Nine written validated references from past employers for seven of the adults.
- (b) Five written validated references from reputable sources for three of the adults.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures were available for the seven adults.
- (d) Internation police vetting was available for two of the adults.

(4)

Seven 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.

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.

Non-Compliance Information

The following policy was reviewed by the inspector and found not to contain the necessary information to meet the regulatory requirements.

(I) The policy on healthy eating did not specify how food is stored and prepared, including heated on site.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

Healthy Eating Policy and Induction Pack has been updated to include how food is stored and prepared, including heated on site. Management also sent parents a message about this on our WhatsApp parents' group. All new parents will receive new updated Healthy Eating Policy and Induction Pack.

Supporting documentation submitted

Copy of child induction letter submitted.

Summary Comment

The actions and evidence submitted have been reviewed. The non-compliances identified under Regulation 10 have been adequately 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.

(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

On the day of inspection,

(1)

There was an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the service.

(2)

The minimum specified adult to child ratio was consistently maintained.

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)
On the day of inspection, a sample of 10 children's files were reviewed, a record in writing was held on file for the following.

- (a) the name and date of birth of the child was available from 7 records.
- (b) the date on which the child first attended the service was available from 9 records reviewed.
- (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 was available from 9 records.
- (e) authorisation for the collection of the child was available for all 10 records.
- (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 was available from 10 records.
- (g) the name and telephone number of the child's registered medical practitioner was available from all 10 records.
- (h) record of immunisations, if any, received by the child was available from 9 records.
- (i) written parental consent for appropriate medical treatment of the child in the event of an emergency was available for all 10 records.

(3)
On the day of inspection, a record in writing in respect of each pre-school child was available and open to inspection on the premises by-

- (c) an authorised person.

Non-Compliance Information

From the sample of 10 records reviewed, the following information was not available,

- (a) the surname of the child was omitted from 3 records.

- (b) the date on which the child first attended the service was omitted from 1 record.
- (c) provision for the date on which the child ceases to attend the service was not present on 10 reviewed records.
- (d) the address of a parent or guardian of the child was omitted from 1 record.
- (h) record of immunisations, received by the child was omitted from 1 record.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

Management have updated enrolment forms with missing information and an end date has been added to forms and to all new enrolment forms. Management and staff will check any new enrolment forms to make sure all information has been entered by parents.

Supporting documentation submitted

Evidence of new form submitted.

Summary Comment

The actions and evidence submitted have been reviewed. The non-compliances identified under Regulation 15 have been adequately addressed.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 22 – Food and drink

A registered provider shall ensure that adequate and suitable, nutritious and varied food and drink is available for each pre-school child attending the pre-school service.

Compliance Information

All meals and snacks within the service are supplied by the parents each day. All food arrives to the service in the morning in the children's lunch bag, perishable food is ready to be stored in the fridge. The hot meals are reheated by staff onsite. On the day of inspection, an adequate amount of food was available to each child. Meals were observed to be nutritious and varied throughout the day. Water was available to children with their meals. Bottles for the younger children were labelled and stored within fridges. Should a child refuse a meal, an alternative is provided from the remaining food within the child's lunchbox.

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 entrance was found to be secured on arrival preventing unauthorised access or exit from the premises.
- The staircase was fitted with a low-level handrail for children's use.
- Wooden gates were present in the hallway and the stairwell to prevent children from accessing the sanitary area, kitchen and the staircase unsupervised.
- Materials were observed to be in a good state of repair.
- Warm running water was available for hand washing at a temperature below 43°C.
- Cleaning products and equipment were stored out of the reach of children.
- Highchairs within the baby room were fitted with a 5-point safety harness and were in good state of repair.
- The outdoor area was secured with tall wooden fencing and a bolted gate.
- Grapes were observed to be cut in half, reducing the risk of choking to the child.

Infection Control:

- The materials and resources throughout the service were visually clean.
- Tables and highchairs were observed to be cleaned prior to and after mealtimes in both care rooms.
- Foot operated pedal bins were available within the service for safe disposal of waste.
- There was adequate handwashing facilities provided throughout the service with warm water, liquid soap and paper towels. Older children were observed to wash their hands with support, before snacks, meals and after nappy changing.
- Aprons and gloves were available and observed in use by staff when changing of a child was required.
- The sanitary facilities were observed to be ventilated by openable windows.

Administration of Medication:

- When interviewed, staff were aware of their responsibilities for the safe administration of medication. No medication was administered on the day of inspection.

Safe Sleep:

- The service had a designated sleep room with appropriate cots available to children.

- Sleep checks were observed to occur every ten minutes.
- The Sleep room temperature was recorded at 17.6 °C on the day of inspection, within the acceptable range of 16 to 20°C.

Fire Safety:

- Fire doors were observed to be unobstructed throughout the service.
- Fire evacuation procedures were clearly displayed in the care rooms.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. On the day of inspection, a wooden frame on an outdoor chalk board was damaged and splintered, posing as a risk to children.

Infection Control:

2. On the day of inspection, after nappy changing, the hands of the babies were observed to be not consistently washed, posing a risk of infection.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. Chalk board has been fixed. Staff have been informed to report any damaged equipment to management.

Infection Control:

2. At our staff meeting we informed staff that they need to wash each baby's hands after nappy changing. Signs have been displayed in nappy changing areas.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

Photo evidence submitted.

Infection Control:

Photo evidence submitted.

Summary Comment

The actions and evidence submitted have been reviewed. The non-compliances identified under Regulation 23 have been adequately addressed.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 27 – Supervision

A registered provider shall ensure that pre-school children attending the service are supervised at all times.

Compliance Information

The minimum required ratio of qualified adults to children in attendance was maintained during the inspection. The staff were observed positioning themselves within sight and sound range of children, allowing for good supervision. The staff were observed to supervise the children when eating their meals. On the day the children did not get an opportunity to play outside due to the inclement weather, however the outdoor areas were set up to ensure that the children are in sight.