

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015LM024
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Name of Service:	Little Acorns Creche
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Address of Service:	Cluain Alainn, Carrigallen, Co. Leitrim
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Eircode:	H12 E364
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Name of Registered Provider:	Gerry Moran
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Service type:	Full Day, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	06/08/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	25	PM	25
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Donegal Early Years Inspectorate, St. Conal's Campus, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal. F92 TD92
Inspection undertaken by:	Neil Toner
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).

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Description of service

The service is located on the outskirts of a town in a housing estate in county Leitrim. It consists of purpose-built building over two floors. The baby room, toddler room and junior preschool are located on the ground floor. The senior preschool is located on the first floor. The service also has a kitchen, sleep room and office on the ground floor. On the day of inspection, the baby preschool room was not in operation. The service is also registered as a school age service.

Staffing

On the day of inspection there was 11 adults employed in the service. There were five adults working directly with the children on the day of the inspection with the person in charge supporting break cover. One adult worked in the kitchen and there was one adult working with school aged children who were attending a summer camp in the service. The registered provider does not work 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 unannounced and focused on the area of governance/ health, welfare and development of child/ safety. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9(1)(2)(4), 11(1)(2), 15(1), 19(1), 23, 25(1)(2) and 26(1)(4).

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A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 15 records of the preschool child.

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.

Statutory Notices

Notice	Date Served	Detail
Immediate Action Notice IAN1502	06/08/2026	Evidence of International Police Vetting was not available for one staff member who had access to children. The International Police Vetting disclosure must be submitted to the Early Years Inspectorate prior to the person having access or contact with children.
Status	The register provider submitted corrective and preventive actions which addressed the statutory notice.	

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.*

(3) The procedures specified in paragraph (2) shall be carried out prior to any person being appointed, assigned or allowed access to or contact with a child attending the pre-school service.

(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.

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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 identified the lines of authority and accountability in the service and the specific roles and responsibilities of each employee.
- (2) Following a review of previous inspection information, information available on the inspection and through discussion with the person in charge, it was determined that three new adults had been employed since the last inspection. The references on file for nine adults were compliant upon the service's last inspection; therefore, they were not reviewed upon this inspection. Of the three new adults, the following was available on file;
- (a) Three written, validated references from past employers.
 - (b) One written, validated references from a reputable source in the absence of past employer.
 - (c) Garda vetting for all new adults was reviewed. In addition, Garda vetting for six adults whose disclosures were identified as due for renewal were requested for review. The service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
- (4) Documentary evidence was reviewed at the last inspection for nine childcare staff. Upon this inspection, of the three new adults employed, two adults who were employed to work with preschool children held an appropriate childcare qualification at Level 5 or above on the National Framework of Qualifications.

Non-Compliance Information

- 9 (2)(d) See statutory notice section in relation to improvement notice IAN1502 served.
- 9 (2)(a)(b) There was no written and validated references from a past employers or reputable source in the absence of past employers for two adults.
- 9 (3) A review of documentation evidenced that the requirements of Regulation 9(2) had not been completed prior to one adult being appointed, assigned, or allowed access to or contact with a child attending the preschool service as outlined above under point 2(a)(b) and 2 (d).

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Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

9 (2)(a)(b) The registered provider has now received and checked all required references for all adults working in the service. Where past employer records weren't available, the registered provider has made sure to get verified references from other trustworthy sources instead. The service have also put a new rule in place that no new employee can start working in the service until all of their paperwork is fully complete.

9 (3) The registered provider can confirm that the staff member has now returned their completed police vetting forms. The registered provider has made assurances that that all new staff must be totally vetted and cleared before they are allowed to start working in the service.

Supporting documentation submitted

- Induction documentation submitted to the inspectorate.
- Evidence of international police vetting has been submitted to the inspectorate.
- Evidence of references has been submitted to the inspectorate.

Summary Comment

The response from the registered provider and supporting documentation submitted has adequately addressed the non-compliances in Regulation 9.

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.

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Compliance Information

(2) The minimum ratio of adults to children was maintained in the following rooms throughout the inspection as follows:

In the Morning

Junior Preschool Room – Two adults cared for 9 children aged from 1 to 2 years of age.

Senior Preschool Room – Two staff cared for 5 children aged from 15 months to 2 years of age.

In the Afternoon

Junior Preschool Room – Two adults cared for 9 children aged from 1 to 2 years of age.

Senior Preschool Room – Two staff cared for 5 children aged from 15 months to 2 years of age.

Non-Compliance Information

11 (1) The registered provider did not ensure that there were always an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the Toddler room in the pre-school service.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

11 (1) The registered provider acknowledged that the toddler room was over capacity by one child during the morning of the inspection. To ensure this does not happen again, the service conduct strict risk assessments every morning to review ratios. The person in charge will review each room daily to guarantee that correct staff-to-child ratios are completely always maintained.

Supporting documentation submitted

11 (1) A risk assessment has been submitted to the inspectorate.

Summary Comment

The response from the registered provider and supporting documentation submitted has adequately addressed the non-compliances in Regulation 11 (1).

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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, d-i)

Thirteen records of the children attending the service were reviewed. The required information including the authorisation to collect the child, details of illness or special needs of the child, emergency contact and record of immunisations were fully completed for each child.

Non-Compliance Information

(1)(b) The date on which the child first attended the service was not recorded and on file for three preschool children.

(1)(c) The date in which the child ceased to attend the service was not on file for three of the files reviewed.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(1)(b) The registered provider acknowledged that information was missing from files on the day of inspection. The registered provider has given assurances that all files have now been fully corrected. To prevent this from happening again, the person in charge will personally re-check all paperwork. The registered provider has also introduced a new checklist system to ensure every application form is fully completed before it is filed.

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(1)(c) The registered provider acknowledged that information was missing from files on the day of inspection. The registered provider has given assurances that all files have now been fully corrected. To prevent this from happening again, the person in charge will personally re-check all paperwork. The registered provider has also introduced a checklist system to ensure every application form is fully completed before it is filed.

Supporting documentation submitted

(1)(b) A checklist has been submitted to the inspectorate.

(1)(c) A checklist has been submitted to the inspectorate.

Summary Comment

The response from the registered provider and supporting documentation submitted has adequately addressed the non-compliances in Regulation 16(1)(b) and 16(1)(c).

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

(1) A registered provider shall, in providing a pre-school service, ensure that-

(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 Needs:

- Nappy changing was observed to be an opportunity for positive engagement and interaction with the children which was observed on the day. One staff member used this time for one-to-one engagement with cuddle and laughter while respecting the dignity of the child.
- The main hot meals were provided by the service and cooked by the cook onsite daily. The meal on the day of inspections was pasta with chicken in a creamy sauce. The snacks are provided by parents and

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brought into the service in lunch boxes and stored in the fridge. Snacks included crackers, fruit, cheese, variety of sandwiches and yoghurts.

- The younger children's basic needs were responded to in a prompt manner, noses wiped as required. Hands and faces cleaned after mealtimes and clothes changed if they were soiled, ensuring dignity was promoted.
- Sleep time in the baby room was individual led where staff members in consultation with parents responded to the individual sleep needs of the children.

Supporting Relationships:

- Staff members were observed to be respectful, gentle, and kind in their interactions towards the children in their care.
- During mealtimes the staff members sat at the table and engaged in social conversation with children promoting a relaxed atmosphere. The staff members sat at the children's level when feeding the younger children or when assisting the children to feed themselves.
- The younger children in the toddler room were observed to be held and cuddled as needed throughout the day.
- There was evidence of familiarity between the staff and children as conversations were had about family life, holidays planned and new arrivals to families.
- Pictures of families displayed on the walls in the care rooms ensured children's connection to home was maintained. The service had made effort to get to know the child and care rooms displayed 'all about me' signage with likes and dislikes noted.

Physical Materials:

- All three care rooms were laid out to facilitate sensory experiences for the child through arts and crafts and sensory tables including water and sand. Fine motor development was supported using jigsaws, art and design and puzzles. Opportunities for imaginary and role play were provided in the home corner and dress up area as well as construction area and farm animal areas.
- All equipment was stored on open shelving at children's heights so that choice can be facilitated.

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- The Toddler room was equipped with a variety of resources to suit the age and stage of the children utilising the room. A small play kitchen with various suitable resources stimulates imagination for the preschool child, a rest area with a library equipped with age-appropriate books allow for sound and language development. Musical toys and shakers allow for sensory development, while a range of arts and crafts facilitate creativity for the young child.

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 equipment in the care rooms was in good condition with toys stored in an orderly fashion on open shelves.
- Emergency exit doors were unobstructed.
- Rooms were observed to be maintained well, with cleaning schedules up to date in all care rooms.

Infection Control:

- The service was clean and in a hygienic condition on the day of the inspection.
- Cleaning records were in place in each room which stated the areas to be cleaned each day.
- Warm water, soap and paper towels were available for effective handwashing.
- Non-touch bins were in place in all sanitary areas.
- Nappy changing procedures were carried out in line with service policy and appropriate infection control measures.

Administration of Medication:

- No medicine was observed to be administered on the day of inspection. Discussions with staff working in the service ensured they were aware of the medication policy and how to administer and record medications required.

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Safe Sleep:

- Children under two were provided with individual cots.
- Each child had access to their own bed linen.
- The temperature of the cot room and the baby room when used for sleep time was monitored and recorded. The temperature of the baby room when used for sleep was 19.2°C. All children present were over 1 years old.

Fire Safety:

- On the day evacuation doors remained clear ensuring safe egress from the service in an emergency.

Non-Compliance Information

Administration of Medication:

1. Six unlabelled creams and ointments designated as 'spare' items by a staff member were stored in the nappy changing area. These items did not have child-specific labels presenting a risk of cross-contamination to the reschool children.

Safe Sleep:

2. Contrary to the service sleep policy, physical sleep checks were observed not to be carried out between 13:52 and 14:09 in the service. Staff members were observed to look at sleeping children through a glass panel and complete sleep records to include the date, time, position, breathing pattern without physically checking the sleeping child.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

Administration of Medication:

1. The registered provider acknowledged that while small labels were used, some items were not clearly marked, which was raised as a cross-contamination risk during the inspection. To fix this immediately, a clear reminder has been placed directly in the changing area. A plan of retraining of all staff on these cross-contamination rules at the next team meeting. The person in charge has given assurances that they will personally ensure these areas are checked daily.

Safe Sleep:

2. To ensure compliance, staff now physically enter the sleep rooms for all checks and log them immediately. The registered provider has retrained the team on the services policy and placed a clear reminder poster directly on the sleep room door.

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Supporting documentation submitted

Administration of Medication:

A poster for reminding staff to attach labels to medications was submitted to the inspectorate.

Safe Sleep:

The service sleep policy was submitted to the inspectorate.

Summary Comment

The response from the registered provider and supporting documentation submitted has adequately addressed the non-compliances in Regulation 23.

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) On the day of inspection, the registered provider ensured that a member of staff was trained in first aid for children (FAR) and was available to children attending the service.

(2)(a)(b) The first aid equipment was fully stocked and readily available if a child required first aid treatment.

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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)(b) The maintenance record for the smoke alarm system indicated that a service was last conducted on 20 October 2025.
- (4) A notice of the procedure to be followed in the event of a fire was wall mounted in all playrooms. A fire assembly point was positioned on the grounds at the side of the building.

Non-Compliance Information

- (1)(a) A record of fire drills was not maintained in the service. It was noted that the last monthly fire drill was conducted on 14 January 2026 and 7 March 2026. The fire policy in the service states that monthly fire drills will take place.
- (1)(b) The maintenance record for the firefighting equipment indicated that a service was last conducted on the 01 March 2025. The fire policy in the service states that annual firefighting equipment maintenance is required.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

- (1)(a) The registered provider will ensure that the fire drill policy is thoroughly reviewed with all staff members, so everyone understands their roles. To guarantee the service stays completely up to date, the person in charge will schedule a specific fire drill date each month and has set recurring reminders to ensure these drills are carried out regularly, logged correctly, and never missed.
- (1)(b) The registered provider will ensure that all required maintenance is up to date, following a visit from the service company on 1 September to complete the necessary servicing. To prevent any future delays, the registered provider will add this item to the daily risk assessment for ongoing checks and monitoring.

Supporting documentation submitted

- (1)(a) an updated fire certificate was submitted to the inspectorate.

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(1)(b) an updated fire safety policy was submitted to the inspectorate.

Summary Comment

The response from the registered provider and supporting documentation submitted has adequately addressed the non-compliances in Regulation 26 (1)(a) and 26 (1)(b).