

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

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| <b>TUSLA Identifier:</b> | TU2015MH005 |
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| <b>Name of Service:</b> | Acorn Academy |
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| <b>Address of Service:</b> | Stackallen, Slane, Co. Meath |
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|                 |          |
|-----------------|----------|
| <b>Eircode:</b> | C15 EE76 |
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|                                     |              |
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| <b>Name of Registered Provider:</b> | Lisa Johnson |
|-------------------------------------|--------------|

|                      |           |
|----------------------|-----------|
| <b>Service type:</b> | Sessional |
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| <b>Date of Inspection:</b> | 07/05/2026 |
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|-----------------------------------|----|----|----|-----|
| <b>No of pre-school children:</b> | AM | 19 | PM | N/A |
|-----------------------------------|----|----|----|-----|

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|-------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:</b> | Tusla Early Years Inspectorate<br>Meath Child & Parent Support Hub,<br>Commons Road,<br>Navan,<br>Co. Meath |
| <b>Inspection undertaken by:</b>                | AM Cunningham                                                                                               |
| <b>Title:</b>                                   | 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

Acorn Academy is a privately owned preschool service located in Co. Meath. The service provides sessional preschool to children aged 2 – 6 years from 9.00am – 12.00pm and participates in the Early Childhood Education and Care (ECCE) scheme. The preschool is operated from a purpose-built single storey building consisting of one care room with an adjoining sensory room, an office and sanitary facilities for children and adults. There are two enclosed outdoor spaces on the premises, a paved area and a garden/grass covered area. There is parking available at drop off and collection times.

### Staffing

The registered provider works directly with the children on a daily basis. An additional staff member is employed to work in the service. A student was also present on the day of inspection.

### 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.

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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.

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### 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) The service had a designated person in charge and a named person to deputise as required.

(b) A designated person in charge was on the premises when the inspectors arrived unannounced to carry out the inspection.

(2) (a)&(b) Staff files were reviewed at the previous inspection and met compliance. The student file was reviewed and two references were available.

(c) Garda vetting disclosure was available for the student in the service. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) Police vetting was not required as no staff member had resided outside the jurisdiction for a period of more than 6 consecutive months as an adult.

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(4) All childcare staff members had a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 and above on the National Framework of Qualifications or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

### 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) On the day of inspection there was an adequate number of staff members working directly with the children attending the service.

(3) The adult to child ratio was correct in the service when the inspector arrived unannounced and remained so throughout the inspection. There were 19 children present aged 3 years to 5 years being cared for by 2 adults. A student was also present.

### 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*

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### Compliance Information

(1)(a) The children were cared for by the same adult which enabled them to form secure relationships, attachments and develop their confidence within the service. Children were observed to be engaged, happy, content and relaxed within the care room and in the outdoor area. The staff members ensured the children were supported in all aspects of their physical, emotional and social wellbeing and demonstrated warmth, kindness, affection and respect in all interactions with the children. Children were spoken to using their first name, appropriate eye contact and gentle vocal tones during all interactions. The service had a healthy eating policy, and the snacks were observed to be healthy. Mealtimes were social experiences and the staff member sat with the children at snack time. There was lots of conversation and laughter between the children. Children were supervised and assisted when needed with hand washing depending on their age and stage of development. A suitable rest area with soft furnishings was available should a child wish to rest or take a break from activities. The care room was well resourced and presented to provide children with the opportunity for child led imaginative play. Children were encouraged to take part in activities and afforded opportunities to make choices. Individual preferences were accommodated as to what and how long children wished to engage with specific chosen activities. The children were provided with outdoor play daily. The outdoor area was well-resourced.

### Supporting Relationships around Children

The service fostered positive relationships by offering support through attentive listening, gentle guidance, and responsive interactions. They encouraged children to work together during activities and resolve conflicts with kindness and respect.

### Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

#### Regulation 21 – Equipment and materials

*A registered provider shall ensure that there is adequate and suitable furniture, play and work equipment and materials available on the premises of the pre-school service.*

### Compliance Information

On observation of the physical environment of the service, the inspector was assured that there was adequate and appropriate furniture, play equipment, materials and resources provided for the children attending the service.

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The environment was designed to encourage exploration, independence, and creativity. Designated interest areas such as the home corner, arts and crafts station, and dress-up area were well-defined, allowing children to engage in imaginative play and creative expression. Open shelves displayed a variety of materials, including play dough, fine motor materials such as peg boards, building blocks and puzzles. These were within easy reach of the children, promoting child-led choice and decision-making. A rest area with soft cushions and books was available, offering children a space to relax or take a break from more active 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

##### General Safety:

- The service main entrance door was secured.
- Furniture, tables and chairs were appropriate for the age range of children attending.

##### Infection Control:

- The service had appropriate facilities provided to meet the number and needs of the children attending the service. All sanitary facilities contained handwash basins, supplied with liquid hand soap and paper towelling, which the children could easily access and use. Children were observed to use the toilet and hand washing facilities with ease, while staff were observed to support and prompt the children to wash their hands correctly after using the toilet, after messy and before snack time
- Thermostatically controlled warm water was available to the children along with liquid soap and paper towels.
- Pedal bins were available throughout the service.
- The service was maintained in a clean condition.

##### Fire Safety:

- All emergency exits were kept clear of obstruction, and regular monthly fire drills took place.

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### Part VI - Safety

#### Regulation 24 - Checking in and out and record of attendance

- (1) A registered provider shall ensure that each pre-school child attending the service is checked in and out of the service by an employee or an unpaid worker.*
- (3) A registered provider shall ensure that-*
- (a) no person other than-*
    - (i) pre-school child attending the service,*
    - (ii) a person dropping or collecting such a child,*
    - (iii) an employee, or*
    - (iv) an unpaid worker, can enter the premises without his or her entry being approved by an employee, and*
  - (b) a daily record in writing is kept of the entry on the premises of any such person.*

#### Compliance Information

- (1) Records were available to show that children in attendance were checked in and out of the service by an employee on a daily basis.
- (3)(a)(i)-(iv) The registered provider ensured that no other person, other than those mentioned above, could enter the premises without approval of an employee.
- (3)(b) A written record was kept of visitors who entered the service, and the inspector was requested to record entry and exit from the service.

### 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.*

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### Compliance Information

- (1) A person trained in first aid for children was always available and rostered to be present for the morning and afternoon sessions.
- (2) (a)(b) A suitably equipped first aid box was stored in a conspicuous position easily accessible to staff. The first aid box was always 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 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) Records were available of fire drills carried out in the service on a monthly basis.
- (b) Records were available detailing the maintenance of the smoke alarm system and firefighting equipment.
- (4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of fire was displayed in a conspicuous position in the preschool room.

### Part VI - Safety

#### Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

### Compliance Information

An insurance certificate was available to demonstrate the preschool service was adequately insured. The service is currently insured to accommodate 22 sessional preschool children, with an expiry date 27/03/2027.