

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:	16/06/2026
----------------------------	------------

No of pre-school children:	AM	11	PM	8
-----------------------------------	----	----	----	---

Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Tusla Early Years Inspectorate, 2nd Floor, St. Conal's Campus, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal.
Inspection undertaken by:	N 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).

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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 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

The registered provider confirmed that a total of nine adults worked in the service. Six adults were present in the service during the inspection. This included four adults who provided direct childcare and the manager who is also the deputy person in charge. The registered provider arrived in the service in the afternoon.

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 and safety. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9, 10, 11, 15, 19, 23, and 26.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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) Following a review of previous inspection information, information available on inspection and discussion with the person in charge, it was determined that three adults had been employed since the previous inspection. Seven staff files were reviewed on the last inspection on 25th of January 2025 and found to be compliant. Three files were reviewed and the following information was available:

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

- (a) Three written and validated references were on file from previous employers particularly their most recent employer.
- (b) Three written and validated references were on file from other sources in the absence of past employment.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all three new staff. Garda vetting for four existing staff members was also requested for review. The service had adhered to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
- (d) A review of files revealed that no adult had lived in a state other than the State for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months, international police vetting was not required.
- (4) Seven of the adults in the service 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, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) to meet the regulatory requirement.

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.

Compliance Information

The following policy was reviewed by the inspector and found to contain the necessary information to meet the regulatory requirements.

(I) Policy on healthy eating.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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 as follows:

In the morning

- Two staff cared for four children ages from 11 months to 18 months of age in the baby room.
- Two staff cared for seven children aged 1 year to 2 years of age.

In the afternoon

- One staff cared for three children ages from 11 months to 18 months of age in the baby room.
- Two staff cared for five children aged 1 year to 2 years of age.

The designated person in charge acted as a floater between both rooms throughout the day for assistance as required.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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-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.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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 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.
- All meals were provided by the parents and brought into the service in lunch boxes and stored in the fridge. The service has a policy in place for parents to provide a meal for the children which was stored safely and heated for the children for their main hot meal of the day. Snacks included crackers, fruit, cheese, variety of sandwiches and yoghurts. The main meal varied with each child but consisted of healthy meats and vegetables in line with the services healthy eating policy.
- 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. Standard cots were provided, and physical sleep checks were completed every ten minutes.

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.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

- The younger children in the baby 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. This service had made effort to get to know the child and care rooms displayed 'all about me' artwork with likes and dislikes noted.

Physical Materials:

- Both 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.
- The baby room was equipped with a variety of resources to suit the age and stage of the children utilising the room. This room is used for children aged 11 months to 18 months of age and therefore there is a focus on floor play with soft matting located in various areas in the room, to ensure comfort for those children crawling and learning to walk. 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.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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.

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:

- On discussion with staff they were aware of their responsibilities for the safe administration of medication. No medication was administered on the day of inspection.

Safe Sleep:

- Staff carried out and recorded physical sleep observations on sleeping children, at least every 10 minutes.
- The sleep room temperature was recorded at 19.2 °C on the day of inspection, within the acceptable range of 16 to 20°C.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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

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. The radiator cover in the baby room was not fixed to the wall. This radiator cover was also not in a good state of repair and required maintenance. The top of the radiator cover was not sealed, it had become loose and a child could potentially be harmed.

Safe Sleep:

2. One cot mattress in the sleep room did not have a safety label. This mattress does not meet with the safety requirements of safe sleep.

3. Two cot mattresses were raised at all ends due to sheets not fitted correctly. Two children were due to be put down in these cot for sleep at 1400hrs. This issue was raised to the staff in the baby room at 1345hrs who promptly attended to the issue and fixed the mattresses.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. The radiator cover has been fixed to the wall and sealed. Staff will report to management in future if any radiator covers need to be fixed.

Safe Sleep:

2. New cot mattress have been purchased. Management will ensure that only mattresses with the required safety label are purchased in future.

3. Staff fixed the mattresses immediately. Staff have been made aware by management that all mattresses need to be flat in all cots when protectors and cot sheets have been put on the mattress.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

1. Photographic evidence submitted.

Safe Sleep:

2. Photographic evidence submitted.

3. Photographic evidence submitted.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Summary Comment

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

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) A record of fire drills as conducted was maintained in the service. It was noted that the last monthly fire drill was conducted on 29th of May 2026.
- (b) The maintenance record for the firefighting equipment indicated that an annual service was conducted on 08 January 2026. The maintenance record for the smoke alarm system indicated that a service was last conducted on 08 January 2026.
- (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.