

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015KE124
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Name of Service:	Acorn Montessori and Creche
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Address of Service:	Osberstown Road, Naas, Co. Kildare
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Eircode:	W91 EC80
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Name of Registered Provider:	Shauna Kehoe
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Service type:	Full Day
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Date of Inspection:	08/06/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	69	PM	45
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Suite 7, Vista Primary Care, Ballymore Eustace Rd, Naas, Co Kildare
Inspection undertaken by:	R. Brien & R. Phillips
Title:	Early Years Inspectors

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 Montessori and Creche is a privately owned service which provides full day care for children from 1 to 6 years. The service is registered to operate from 07:30 to 18:30, Monday to Friday. Sessional care is provided from 08:30 to 11:30, 09:00 to 12:00 and from 09:30 to 12:30.

The service operates from a two-storey, purpose-built premises in a rural setting between Naas and Sallins in Co Kildare. There are six care rooms in the service. The Toddler room caters for children aged 1 to 2 years. The Pre Montessori room caters for children aged 2 to 3 years. The Montessori 1, Montessori 2, 08:30 ECCE and 09:30 ECCE rooms cater for children aged 3 to 5 years. The 08:30 and 09:30 ECCE rooms are located on the first floor. The service also has a separate cot room. There is a large, fully enclosed outdoor play area to the side of the premises.

Staffing

The service currently employs 22 staff including two managers, a cook, and 2 school age childcare staff. There were 13 staff working directly with the children during the inspection who were supported by two managers. The registered provider works directly in the service and was present during the 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

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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 the following regulations:

- 9 (1)(a)(b),(2)(a)(b)(c)(d),(4) – Management and recruitment,
- 11 (1),(2),(8)(a) – Staffing levels,
- 19 (1)(b) – Health, welfare and development of child,
- 23 – Safeguarding, health, safety and welfare of child,
- 25 (1),(2) –First aid,
- 26 (1),(4) – Fire safety measures.

These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under the following regulations:

- 19 (1)(b) – Health, welfare and development of child,
- 23 – Safeguarding, health, safety and welfare of child.

As a result, the scope of the inspection included the Toddler, Pre Montessori rooms and the outdoor area.

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.

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Acknowledgments

The inspectors wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, managers, 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

(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)(b)

The service had a designated person in charge and a named person to deputise as required who were on the premises throughout the inspection.

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(2)

The inspection focused on the full recruitment records for eight adults employed since the last inspection on 20 August 2024. In addition, Garda vetting for two adults whose disclosures were identified as due for renewal were requested for review.

Documentation was reviewed in respect of these adults and met regulatory requirements as follows.

(a)(b)

Of the 16 validated, written references that were required, 13 were available from a past employer and 3 were available from a reputable source

(c)

Garda vetting disclosures from the National Vetting Bureau of An Garda Síochána were available for the 10 adults. 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 required and was available for three staff members who had lived outside the State for a period exceeding 6 months as an adult.

(4)

Evidence of completion of a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at level 5 or above on the National Framework of Qualifications or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent was on file for eight staff members. One of these staff members held a letter of qualification recognition, and two of these staff members held a letter of eligibility to practice from the Department of Children, Disability and Equality.

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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.

(8) Without prejudice to paragraphs (2) to (7)-

(a) a registered provider of a pre-school service other than a child-minding service or a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that there are at least 2 adults on the premises at all times,

Compliance Information

(1)

An adequate number of adults were working directly with the children at all times during the inspection.

(2)

The minimum ratio of adults to children for full day care services were adhered to at all times during the inspection. There were 69 children attending the service being supervised by 13 adults on the day of inspection.

(8)(a)

There were at least two adults on the premises at all times during the inspection.

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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-

(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)(b)

Meals were provided at regular intervals, and drinking water was available and accessible to children throughout the day. Dinner was served from 11:45 and all children had a drink with their meal. Younger children were given bibs for dinnertime. Staff were observed asking children if they wanted more dinner and additional portions were given to all children who requested more. Children were given time to eat their meal.

Children's care needs were observed to be met promptly. Staff were observed cleaning children's noses as required and children's hands and faces were cleaned after meals. Children's wet clothing was changed as required. Children's nappies were changed regularly, and staff were observed engaging warmly with children when providing this care.

An area was provided within the rooms where the children could rest or take a break from activities. There was a designated nap time for children and children who attended the Toddler and Pre Montessori rooms who did not have a sleep were brought to the outdoor area. Children's choices in relation to sleep were respected. A child in the Pre Montessori room who does not usually have a sleep was observed requesting a nap and staff made up a bed for this child.

Suitable cots and low-level beds were provided appropriate to the children's age and stage of development. All children were made comfortable for sleep; staff removed children's shoes and outer clothing; they provided the children with blankets, and they offered soothers to those who used them. The environments were calm and conducive to sleep, with staff soothing the children as needed.

Staff displayed warmth and sensitivity during all interactions with the children. Children were comforted promptly when they became upset. Staff were observed holding children and speaking to them softly. Children were addressed by their name, and staff used gentle tones and praise and interacted with children in a positive manner. Staff were observed to use distraction and gentle tones when promoting positive behaviour in line with the service's behaviour policy.

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The children moved freely, exploring their environment, playing and engaging with each other and the staff throughout the inspection. Play materials and equipment were positioned at an accessible level which facilitated choice.

The staff described how they communicate with parents daily about their child at arrival and collection times and how they record daily information on food, sleep and nappy changes for each child using an online application.

A large, fully enclosed outdoor play area was located to the side of the premises and was divided into five areas and had a mix of tarmac, artificial grass and grass surfacing. A range of developmentally appropriate play equipment was provided in the outdoor play area. All children were provided with the opportunity to play outdoors during the inspection and were dressed appropriately to the weather. Staff were observed applying sunscreen to children before they used the outdoor area.

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 entrance door to the service was adequately secured to ensure the safety of the children within and to avoid unauthorised persons accessing the service or children exiting unsupervised.
- The toys and play equipment observed in use by the children on the day of inspection appeared in good working order.
- Cleaning agents and medicines were stored safely out of reach of children.
- All storage facilities were inaccessible to children.

Infection Control:

- Liquid soap, warm water and paper towels were available to facilitate hand washing. Staff and children were observed to carry out hand washing as appropriate.
- Children's nappies were changed in line with the service's nappy changing policy to reduce the risk of the spread of infection.

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- Waste was managed appropriately with the use of pedal bins.
- Individual bed linen was provided for children and was laundered weekly or as required.
- All cot mattresses in use had waterproof covers.

Administration of Medication:

- There were documented care plans available for children attending the service who required emergency medication. Staff working in the rooms with the children were aware of the treatment plans and demonstrated knowledge of the procedures to follow if medication was required.
- Staff demonstrated, through discussion, that they were familiar with the procedures and practices in place for the administration of medication in line with the service policy on medication administration.

Safe Sleep:

- Children were physically monitored while sleeping and sleep checks were carried out and documented every 10 minutes. Discussion with staff demonstrated that they were familiar with safe sleep guidelines.
- An adult remained in the room at all times where children were sleeping on low beds.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. In the Toddler room, a child, aged 1 year, was not supervised while eating their dinner for a period of eight minutes, posing a risk of choking.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. While there were 3 staff in our Toddler room with 10 children at mealtime, we acknowledge that nobody was sitting at the table with the child. We have introduced a new policy: Supervision of Children this policy incorporates regulation 23, ensuring the safety of all children who attend the service. All staff were given non-contact time to read, understand and sign the policy. All staff were spoken to by management regarding the policy and its importance. We will also ensure this is brought up at our next staff meeting. As with all new staff starting at Acorn this policy will be included within their induction email. This will be signed on commencement.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

Written evidence was submitted to demonstrate the corrective and preventive actions submitted by the registered provider.

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Summary Comment

The corrective and preventive actions as stated by the registered provider have been deemed to address this non-compliance.

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)

A person trained in first aid was immediately available to the children at all times on the day of inspection.

(2)

(a) First aid boxes were safely stored in an easily accessible and conspicuous location within the service.

(b) A first aid box was available to the adults and children in the service at all times.

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.

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Compliance Information

(1)(a)

A written record was available detailing monthly fire drills that had taken place in the service. The last fire drill was carried out on 28 May 2026.

(b)

The number, type and maintenance record of firefighting equipment and smoke alarms on the premises was available. There was a record to show that the firefighting equipment had been serviced on 30 September 2025, and that quarterly maintenance of the smoke alarm system had taken place on 04 March 2026.

(4)

The procedures to be followed during a fire drill and in the event of a fire were displayed in conspicuous locations within the service.