

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015LK007
--------------------------	-------------

Name of Service:	Acorns Montessori School
-------------------------	--------------------------

Address of Service:	Cahervalley, Crecora, Co Limerick
----------------------------	-----------------------------------

Eircode:	V94 WPD7
-----------------	----------

Name of Registered Provider:	Nancy Keyes
-------------------------------------	-------------

Service type:	Sessional
----------------------	-----------

Date(s) of Inspection:	21/03/2025
-------------------------------	------------

No of pre-school children:	AM	9	PM	N/A
-----------------------------------	----	---	----	-----

Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Tusla Early Years Inspectorate Office, 2 nd Floor Estuary House, Henry Street Limerick.
Inspection undertaken by:	M Riordan
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
---------------------------------	----------------

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Description of service

Acorns Montessori School is a private preschool in Crecora, near Limerick city, operating since 2005. It runs Monday to Friday from 9.00am to 12.00pm accommodating up to 11 children aged 2 to 6 years. The school is housed in a purpose-built, single-story building on the registered provider's home grounds and features a securely enclosed outdoor play area at the rear.

Staffing

The registered provider is the owner and person who operates the service on a daily basis. A relief person is available if required at the facility. Both the achieved a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education.

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 announced and focused on the area of governance/health, welfare and development of child/ safety/ premises and facilities.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulations 9, 11, 19, 23 and 29.

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

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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 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

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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 registered provider was present on the day of the inspection. There was a second person available close by the facility who could be called on in the event of an emergency.

(b) The staff roster indicated that the registered provider or their relief person were always available on the premises.

(2)(a) Two written references were available for the registered provider and the relief staff member. One of these references was available from a previous employer.

(b) There were 3 references available for reputable sources.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures received from the National Vetting Bureau of An Garda Síochána were available for the registered provider and for the relief person. 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 for the registered provider or for the relief person.

(4) The registered provider and the relief person both held an appropriate qualification in Early Childhood Care and Education.

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 the inspection there were nine pre-school children under the supervision of the registered provider.

(3) The adult/child ratio was correct in the facility. The registered providers ensured that at all times the number of children present in the service met the requirements of the regulations.

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

Compliance Information

BASIC NEEDS:

- During the inspection it was noted that the Pre-school focused on supporting each child's learning, development, and well-being.
- A healthy eating policy was in place, with parents providing nutritious snacks such as fruit, sandwiches, yogurts, cheese, and crackers. Perishable items were refrigerated if needed.
- Children had unrestricted access to toilets, which are equipped with hot water, liquid soap, and paper towels for hygiene. Waste disposal was handled with foot pedal-operated, lidded bins.
- Protective clothing was available for messy play, and the availability of rain gear ensured outdoor play regardless of weather.
- A rest area with soft furnishings was available in the library corner for relaxation and quiet time.
- On the day of the inspection it was noted that outdoor play was part of the daily routine, regardless of weather conditions.

PHYSICAL AND MATERIAL ENVIRONMENT:

- The pre-school room was spacious, with clearly defined activity areas for individual and group play.
- Child-friendly storage with low-height open shelves allowed easy access to materials.
- Activity areas included:
 - Home corner & imagination play area.
 - Work/tool bench.
 - Art and Crafts area with accessible supplies.
 - Montessori teaching area with educational materials.
 - Library corner for quiet reading and relaxation.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

- Children's artwork was displayed at their eye level, along with educational posters on topics like seasons, colours, letters, sounds, and Irish vocabulary.
- A family wall showcased photos of each child's family.
- The outdoor play area had soft impact rubber matting and was usable in all weather conditions.
- A large polytunnel next to the playground provided space for sand/water play, digging, planting, and growing vegetables and flowers.

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:

Adequate measures were taken at the service to ensure a safe, secure, and well-monitored environment for all pre-school children.

Controlled Access: The pre-school door was securely locked, with entry managed by the registered provider to prevent children from leaving unsupervised.

Emergency Exits: The fire exits were unobstructed and clear.

Safe Play Equipment: Toys and play materials were age-appropriate, well-maintained, and free from hazards like pinch points, crush points, or sharp edges.

Proper Waste Disposal: Waste was kept inaccessible indoors and outdoors, with foot pedal-operated, lidded bins ensuring safe disposal. Wheelie bins were stored in an area inaccessible to the children when outdoors.

Chemical Safety: Cleaning agents were stored out of children's reach on a high shelf.

Outdoor Safety: Exit gates were secured to prevent children from accessing unsafe areas, and supervision was continuous during outdoor play.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

INFECTION CONTROL:

A high standard of operational hygiene was maintained throughout the school. Tabletops were cleaned and disinfected before snack time. Handwashing facilities included hot water, liquid soap, and paper towels at all sinks for both staff and children.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-

- (a) of sound and stable structure,*
- (b) safe and secure,*
- (c) kept adequately lit, heated and ventilated*
- (d) cleaned, maintained and repaired, as required, and*
- (e) equipped with adequate and suitable sanitary facilities.*

Compliance Information

- (a) The building appeared to be of sound and stable structure both internally and externally and no obvious defects were noted on inspection.
- (b) The premises appeared safe and secured. The outdoor area was well secured preventing any unauthorised access to or exit from this area of the service.
- (c) All areas were well lit by natural light and by artificial light when needed. There was no evidence of mould, mildew, stale smells, stuffiness or condensation.
- (d) The areas outside were all well maintained and routine cleaning schedules were in place for all internal and external areas.
- (e) There were an adequate number of toilets available in the service for both the number of children and adults at the service.