

TUSLA REGULATORY INSPECTION REPORT

TUSLA Identifier: TU2015LK007

Name of Service: Acorns Montessori

Address of Service: Cahervalley, Crecora, Co. Limerick

Email Address: keyes_nancy@hotmail.com

Name of Registered Service Provider: Nancy Keyes

Type of service registered: Sessional ☒

Date(s) of Inspection: 2 9 0 4 2 0 2 1

No of Pre-School Children present during Inspection: AM 6 PM N/A

Address of the Early Years Inspectorate: Early Years Inspectorate Office,
South East Wing,
St. Joseph's Hospital,
Mulgrave Street,
Limerick.

Inspection undertaken by : M Riordan
Title: Early Years Inspector

Areas which were the subject of this Inspection

Governance	Health, Welfare and Development	Safety
------------	---------------------------------	--------

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

TUSLA REGULATORY INSPECTION REPORT

Description of Service	Acorns Montessori school is located in Crecora, in a rural setting, not far from Limerick city. The service was opened in 2005. It operates Monday to Friday, 9.00am to 12.00md. It presently caters for a maximum of 11 children. It provides a service for children from 2 years and 8 months to 5 years of age. The service operates from a purpose built, single story building located on the grounds of the Registered Providers home. Sanitary accommodation is located next to the Pre-school room. A securely enclosed outdoor play area is located at the rear of the premises.
Staffing	The Registered Provider is the owner and operates as a single handed provider of the service. She has achieved a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education. She engages in ongoing professional training and development in all areas of Early years education.
Methodology	Tusla's Early Years Inspectorate (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. 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 areas of Governance, Health, Welfare and Development of Child and Safety. Inspections may also focus on other areas as required. The inspection process has been amended to minimise the amount of time that inspectors spend in the service. A sampling process was used to assess compliance under Regulation 19 Health Welfare and Development of Child and Regulation 23 Safeguarding Health, Safety and Welfare of Child. 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.
Additional Information	Not applicable.
Acknowledgements	The inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the Registered Provider and the children who were present on the day of the inspection.

GOVERNANCE

Part III - Management and Staff

Regulation 9 - Management and Recruitment

- (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.*
- (7) *A registered provider shall ensure that all employees, unpaid workers and contractors are appropriately supervised and provided with appropriate information and where necessary training, including in relation to the following:*
- (a) the policies, procedures and statements of the service specified in Schedule 5;*

Compliance Information:

- (2) The Registered Provider ensures that any relief person working at the service is suitable and competent.
- The following required documentation for the Registered Provider was viewed at the last inspection.
- (a) Written references from the persons past employers and in particular the most recent employer.
 - (b) References from reputable sources where past employer references were not obtainable.
 - (c) Vetting disclosures received from the National Vetting Bureau of the Garda Síochána in accordance with the Act of 2012 in respect of each person.
 - (d) Not applicable.
- (7)(a) Prior to returning to work the Registered Provider revised the policies and procedures in relation to COVID-19 including:
- Infection Control policy, Risk Management policy, Incident Plan, Training on correct procedures for hand washing, revised drop off and collection procedures and revised procedures for cleaning and infection control.

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:	A risk management policy was in place which identified any potential risks and the controls required to reduce or eliminate the risk. The policy had been reviewed in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. The policy on infection control had been updated to include infection control measures for COVID-19.
-------------------------	--

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:	(1) The Registered Provider ensured that an adequate number of staff were working directly with the children at all times. (2) On the day of the inspection the Registered Provider had 6 preschool children in attendance. The adult/child ratio was correct.
-------------------------	--

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

Compliance Information:	(1)(a) SUPPORTING RELATIONSHIPS AROUND CHILDREN: Outdoor play had become the focus for the children throughout each day at the service. A well-resourced outdoor area at the rear of the premises provided a safe space for the children to play and learn. A Polytunnell was recently added to the outdoor area and children enjoyed sensory and messy play in this space. Appropriate outdoor clothing was worn by all children. All parents were provided with updates to the policies and procedures for the service in light of Covid-19 restrictions. Children were dropped off and collected each day to and from the designated outdoor area. The parents did not meet outside and did not enter the Pre-school building.
-------------------------	---

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 19 - Health, Welfare and Development of Child

Detailed feedback in relation to each child's day was shared through a text message system with parents. In light of Covid-19 restrictions these measures minimised the physical contact time between the Registered Provider and parents at drop off and collection times while at the same time keeping parents informed of the events at the Pre-school.

Sanitary accommodation was located next to the Pre-school room. Warm water and soap were available to ensure adequate hand washing took place.

Rest areas with soft seating, cushions and soft floor mats were accessible in the Pre-school if children required a rest.

PHYSICAL AND MATERIAL ENVIRONMENT:

The Pre-school room was large spacious vicinity with areas of activities well stretched out to encourage children to work individually or in small groups. All materials were stored on low level, open shelving. Waist high tables and chairs were used to facilitate dining at break time and for table top activities such as art and craft exercises.

Children were encouraged to choose freely activities of their choice. The materials and play equipment in the room was organised into the following areas; home corner, an imagination play area, a work/tool bench, an art/craft's area with art paper, paint brushes, paint and bottles of glue accessible and a Montessori teaching area. A quiet relaxation area was created in the library corner.

Art work was displayed and items of interest were at the child's eye level. The children had free access each day to an outdoor play area at the rear of the premises. This area was covered with rubber matting and was available for use by the children regardless of the weather conditions. A large Polytunnell was located next to the playground. Sand and water play was available in this area. A planting area was also designated in the tunnel for the children.

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:

On arrival to the service, the door to the Pre-school was secured. There was a hand sanitising station inside the main entrance. Contact details of all visitors to the service were recorded.

Cleaning agents were easily available and were stored in inaccessible cupboards and safe areas, well out of reach of children. Toys used in the service were cleaned thoroughly as required and at the end of each day.

The outdoor areas were well secured with a fence surrounding the perimeters of the space.

INFECTION CONTROL:

The Registered Provider was aware of the need to self isolate if feeling unwell and was aware of the required actions to be taken if a child became symptomatic while in the service. An isolation space was identified and a supply of Personnel Protective Equipment was available if required. Accurate attendance records were maintained each day of the children, with arrival and departure times documented.

Personal waste including used tissues and all cleaning waste were appropriately disposed of, in foot pedal operated, lidded bins in each area of the service. Hand washing occurred at regular intervals throughout the day. A supply of warm water, liquid soap, paper towels were available in all areas of the service.

A written cleaning record was available where high contact areas were regularly cleaned. Play equipment in the indoor and outdoor areas were cleaned on a regular basis and a record of cleaning was maintained.

All toys, play materials and equipment available to the children were cleaned at the end of each day.

The Pre-school room and sanitary areas were adequately ventilated by natural ventilation and the windows remained open at all times.

A good standard of operational hygiene was noted throughout all areas of the service.