

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015DL052
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Name of Service:	Aurora's Hobbits Ltd
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Address of Service:	Aveltygort, Crossroads, Killygordon, Co. Donegal
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Eircode:	F93 X9YA
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Name of Registered Provider:	Aurora McAlynn
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Service type:	Full Day
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Date of Inspection:	11/03/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	27	PM	20
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, TUSLA Child & Family Agency, Markievicz House, Barrack St, Sligo, F91 XC84
Inspection undertaken by:	S. Killeen L. Costello
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).

Conditions if applicable	Non-Applicable
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Description of service

Aurora's Hobbits is a private childcare service located in a rural area in the townland of Killygordan Co. Donegal. Full day care, part time and sessional care is offered to children aged 0-6 years old. Opening hours are from 07:30am-18:00pm, Monday-Friday. The service operates between two buildings located on either side of a private family home. The service has four care rooms, three of which were in operation on the day of inspection. A sleep room, kitchen, staff room and office are also provided. The service has several play areas which are located to the front and side of the premises.

Staffing

There are nine adults employed in the service, On the day of inspection six adults worked directly with the preschool children. There is also a janitor and a cook. The registered provider was working directly with the pre-school children 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/ safety/ premises and facilities. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

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Additional Information

- (1) An Immediate Action Notice (IAN) was issued to the registered provider on 11 March 2026 in relation to regulation 9 (2)(c) where evidence of Garda vetting disclosure was not available for one adult who had access to the preschool children.
- (2) An Immediate Action Notice (IAN) was issued to the registered provider on 11 March 2026 in relation to regulation 23 General Safety in respect of unsecured looped cable at child's height accessible in the outdoor area. A written response was received on the 12 March 2026 to the IAN stating that the area had been secured. This was deemed adequate by the inspectors.
- (3) An Immediate Action Notice (IAN) was issued to the registered provider on 11 March 2026 in relation to regulation 23 General Safety in respect of two unsecured blind chords accessible to preschool children in the toddler room. A written response was received on 12 March 2026 stating that the blind chords had been secured.
- (4) An Immediate Action Notice (IAN) was issued to the registered provider on 11 March 2026 in relation to regulation 23 General Safety in respect of water temperatures in the children's hand wash sinks exceeding 50°C posing a risk of scalding to the preschool child. A written response received on the 12 March 2026 stating that this safety issue had been resolved.

The contents of the report are compiled by the inspectorate body.

Acknowledgments

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

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(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.*

(2) 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 or deputy 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) (a) (b)

Following a review of previous inspection information, the record of 16 adults were reviewed on last inspection. From information available on inspection and discussion with the person in charge it was determined that three new staff members had been employed since the previous inspection. The three files were the focus of this review. The following vetting information was available for three adults:

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- (a) Four written validated reference from past employers for the three of the adults.
 - (b) One written validated reference from reputable sources one of the adults.
 - (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for eight staff.
- (4) Two of the adult files reviewed, 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, Disability and Equality (DCDE) to meet the regulatory requirement.

Non-Compliance Information

- (2) (c)
- An immediate action notice was issued to the register provider on the day of inspection for a staff member on the premises with no garda vetting and who had access to the preschool children.
- (2) (d)
- It could not be ascertained if international police vetting was required for one of the adults due to gaps in the employment record on file. This was identified as a non-compliance on previous inspections on the 30 April 2025 and 11 September 2025 and actions put in place failed to prevent a reoccurrence.
- (4) Evidence for one adult file reviewed did not confirm certification of 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.

Supporting documentation submitted

- (2) (c) (d)
- No Evidence submitted due to the staff member no longer working in the service.
- (4) Evidence of qualifications submitted.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified under regulation 9 has been adequately addressed.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 11 - Staffing levels

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(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) On the day of inspection, there was an adequate number of adults working directly with the preschool children attending the service.
- (2) The minimum ratio of adults to children was maintained at all times throughout the inspection.
- (8) The registered provider ensured that there were always at least two adults on the premises when children were present in the service as evidenced in a sample review of attendance records.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 16 – Record in relation to pre-school service

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of the following information in relation to the service:

- (a) the name, position, qualifications and experience of the person in charge and of every other employee, unpaid worker and contractor;*
- (b) details of the class of service and the age profile of children for which the service is registered to provide services;*
- (c) details of the adult: child ratios in the service;*
- (d) the type of care or programme provided in the service;*
- (e) the facilities available;*

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- (f) *the opening hours and fees;*
- (g) *the policies, procedures and statements the service is required to maintain in accordance with Regulation 10;*
- (h) *details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis;*
- (i) *details of staff rosters on a daily basis;*
- (j) *details of any medication administered to a pre-school child attending the service with signed parental consent;*
- (k) *details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.*

(2) *A registered provider shall ensure that-*

- (a) *all documents and records relating to references and Garda and police vetting obtained under Regulation 9(2) are retained for a period of 5 years from the date on which the person to whom the document or record relates commences working in the service, and*
- (b) *a record referred to in subparagraph (h), (j) or (k) of paragraph (1) is retained for a period of 2 years from the date on which the child to whom it relates ceases to attend the service, or in the case of a preschool service in a drop-in centre or of a temporary pre-school service, for a period of 2 years from the date on which the child attends the service.*

(3) *A record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection on the premises, and the documents and records referred to in paragraph (2)(a) shall be open to inspection whether on the premises or elsewhere, by an authorised person.*

(4) *A record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection on the premises by a parent or guardian of a child but only in respect of information concerning that child.*

Compliance Information

(1) The person in charge demonstrated that written records (a-k) were maintained within the service.

- (2)
 - (a) The person in charge is aware of the statutory requirement to maintain the records outlined in regulation 9 (2) for a period of five years.

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- (b) The person in charge is aware of the statutory requirement to maintain children's attendance records, medication administration records and accident and incident records for a minimum of two years from the date in which the child attends the service.
- (3) These records were made available to the inspector on the day of inspection.
- (4) These records were made available to the parent/guardian of the child as evidenced by the parent signature.

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 unauthorized access or exit from the premises.
- The staircase was fitted with a low-level handrail for children's use.
- 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.
- The outdoor area was secured with tall wooden fencing and a bolted gate.

Infection Control:

- Tables and highchairs were observed to be cleaned prior to and after mealtimes.
- Foot operated pedal bins were available within the service for safe disposal of waste.
- There was adequate handwashing facilities provided throughout the service with 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.
- Child friendly handwashing posters were placed beside the sinks.

Administration of Medication:

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- 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:

- The service had a designated sleep room.
- Sleep checks were observed to occur every ten minutes.

Fire Safety:

- Fire doors were observed to be unobstructed throughout the service.
- Fire evacuation procedures were clearly displayed in the care rooms.
- Fire extinguishers were on the premises and easily accessible.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

- An Immediate Action Notice (IAN) was issued to the registered provider on 11 March 2026 in relation to regulation 23 General Safety in respect of unsecured looped cable at child's height accessible in the outdoor area. A written response was received on the 12 March 2026 to the IAN stating that the area had been secured. This was deemed adequate by the inspectors.
- An Immediate Action Notice (IAN) was issued to the registered provider on 11 March 2026 in relation to regulation 23 General Safety in respect of two unsecured blind chords accessible to preschool children in the toddler room. A written response was received on 12 March 2026 stating that the blind chords had been secured.
- An Immediate Action Notice (IAN) was issued to the registered provider on 11 March 2026 in relation to regulation 23 General Safety in respect of water temperatures in the children's hand wash sinks exceeding 50°C posing a risk of scalding to the preschool child. A written response received on 12 March 2026 stating that a thermostatically controlled water system had been installed and safety issue had been resolved
- A large pane of glass was stored in the corner of the toddler outdoor play area posed a risk of injury to the preschool children.
- Unsecure wires accessible to the preschool children from the baby monitor were observed in the sleep over room.
- The service used shaving foam for sensory activities this was stored in an open cupboard accessible to the preschool children in the Aragon room. Shaving foam cannot be used in preschool services as it poses a risk to the preschool child if ingested.

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(7) There was a number of exposed pipes in the outdoor play area which posed a trip hazard to the preschool children.

(8) A cot in the baby sleep room had sharp exposed edges or points, which may cause injury to the child.

Infection Control:

Inspectors observed a number of practices which posed a risk of transmission of infection within the service.

(9) There was no waterproof covering on four cot mattresses, therefore the cot mattress could not be cleaned efficiently after using posing a risk of contamination.

(10) One mattress in the baby sleep room was heavily soiled with a black substance, posing a risk to the preschool child.

(11) Nappy changing units and mats were observed to require thorough cleaning as evident from a build-up of dust and dirt in the corners. This non-compliance was identified on the services last inspection on the 11 September 2025 and actions put in place by the registered provider failed to prevent a reoccurrence.

Administration of Medication:

(12) Medication was stored in an unlocked fridge accessible to the preschool child in the toddler room. This practice was found to be non-compliant on previous inspections on the 30 April 2025 and the 11 September 2025. The actions submitted by the registered provider on both occasions failed to prevent a reoccurrence, posing a continued risk to the preschool child.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

- (1) Unsecured wire/cable in the outdoor park resolved on the day of inspection. Management will ensure the team are carrying out their outdoor checklists daily and repairs made were necessary.
- (2) Blind cord accessible to toddlers, resolved on the day of inspection before the inspectors left. New blinds were securely fitted to the windows. Management will ensure the team are carrying out their indoor checklists daily and repairs made were necessary.
- (3) Water temperature was 50 °C in the Frodo room. The children were removed from the room, and the genitor fixed the water temperature before the session commenced the following day. Management will ensure the team are carrying out their indoor checklists daily and repairs made were necessary.
- (4) The toddler park was decluttered. Management will ensure the team are carrying out their daily outdoor checklists and the health and safety of the children will remain paramount.

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- (5) The wires coming from our heart monitors in the sleep room under the cots were boxed in for safety. Management will ensure the team are carrying out their daily indoor checklists and the health and safety of the children will remain paramount.
- (6) Shaving foam was witnessed by inspector up on a shelf unused. Shaving foam will not be used in the preschool services.
- (7) All pipes have been tidied up in our outdoor environment. Management will ensure the team are carrying out their daily outdoor checklists and the health and safety of the children will remain paramount.
- (8) All pipes have been tidied up in our outdoor environment. Management will ensure the team are carrying out their daily outdoor checklists and the health and safety of the children will remain paramount.

Infection Control:

- (9) All waterproof covering on our four cot mattresses has been dressed appropriately. The team checks this daily upon opening our sleep room daily
- (10) One new mattress was purchased for our baby sleep room.
- (11) Nappy changing units and mats are regularly cleaned. Management will ensure the team are carrying out their daily indoor checklists, their daily cleaning checklist and the health and safety of the children will remain paramount.

Administration of Medication:

- (12) The toddler room's fridge was resecured with a new fridge lock. Management will ensure the team are carrying out their daily indoor checklists, their daily cleaning checklist and the health and safety of the children will remain paramount.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

- (1) Photographic evidence submitted of accessible cable in the out door play area removed, it is acknowledged that this was removed on the day of inspection.
- (2) Photographic evidence submitted of secure blind.
- (3) Photographic evidence had been submitted in response to the immediate action notice on the 12 march 2026, evidence of thermostatic controlled water devise installed.
- (4) Photographic evidence submitted of area decluttered.
- (5) Photographic evidence submitted of accessible wires secured.

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- (6) Shaving foam was removed on the day of the inspection.
- (7) Photographic evidence of exposed pipes covered submitted.
- (8) Photographic evidence of repaired cot.

Infection Control:

- (9) Photographic evidence of new waterproof mattress covers submitted.
- (10) Photographic evidence of new cot mattress submitted.
- (11) No evidence submitted.

Administration of Medication:

- (12) Photographic evidence of new lock on fridge submitted.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified under regulation 23 has been adequately addressed.

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.*
- (2) Where there are more than 15 children attending a pre-school service in a drop-in centre, the registered provider shall ensure that one employee or unpaid worker is assigned responsibility for the checking in and out of children.*
- (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.*

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(4) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing referred to in paragraph (3)(b) is retained for a period of one year from the date to which it relates.

Compliance Information

- (1) Records showed that members of staff checked each child in and out of the service during the inspection. These details were recorded in an attendance record.
- (3) (a) There was a visitor record kept in the ground floor hallway of the service. The visitor record showed that the staff approved the entry to the service of people other than a preschool child attending the service, a person dropping off a preschool child, employee or unpaid worker.
- (b) The records contained dated entries of visitors to the service.

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.*
- (2) The record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection by-*
- (a) a parent or guardian of a pre-school child attending or proposing to attend the pre-school service,*
 - (b) an employee, and*
 - (c) an authorised person.*
- (3) A registered provider shall ensure that a record referred to in paragraph (2) is retained for a period of 5 years after its creation*
- (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 procedure was in place to practice and record monthly fire drills. The last documented fire drill was dated the 10 February 2026.

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(b) The records for the smoke detection system indicated the last service occurred on the 11 June 2025.

(2) The record referred to in paragraph (1) was available and open to inspection by-

(c) an authorised person.

(4) On the day of inspection, a notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of fire were observed to be displayed in a conspicuous place within the premises.

Non-Compliance Information

(1) (b)

The records are available for the maintenance of the firefighting equipment was recorded as November 2024. Annual servicing of all firefighting equipment is required.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(1) The servicing has taken place, and documents have previously been sent. Our annual servicing of all firefighting equipment is mandatory and will be obtained when occurs.

Supporting documentation submitted

(1) Maintenance report submitted, which includes the completion dates for Portal firefighting equipment.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 26 has been adequately addressed.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 27 – Supervision

A registered provider shall ensure that pre-school children attending the service are supervised at all times.

Compliance Information

On the day of the inspection, children were observed to be appropriately supervised at all times. Staff were strategically positioned across both indoor and outdoor environments, ensuring that all children remained within

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sight and sound. Supervision was active and attentive; staff were seen to sit closely with the children during mealtimes and remained directly engaged in their activities. Transition from outdoor to indoor was observed to be managed efficiently with staff communicating at all times what child were present or had been brought inside.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

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

- (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

- (b) The premises was safe and secure. All exit doors were secured to prevent children leaving the facility unsupervised.
- (e) There were adequate sanitary facilities provided suitable for the needs of the children attending.

Non-Compliance Information

(c)

The service did not appear to be adequately heated and ventilated as follows:

- Room temperature in the baby sleep room was measured at 12.1°C. This is not within the acceptable temperature for safe sleep.
- The inspectors observed evidence of a black substance in the sleep room of the baby room which posed potential health risks to children in attendance. This was found to be non-compliant on previous inspection on 11 September 2025. The corrective actions submitted following the inspection failed to prevent recurrence of this non-compliance.

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- Large brown stains on the roof of the sleep- room which required cleaning.

(d)

The premises was not observed to be cleaned and maintained as required. The inspectors observed a number of areas that required attention as follows:

- In the baby sleep room, the paint on the walls was flaking and bubbling.
- The premises required cleaning, as evidenced by accumulations of dust in certain parts of the building including the toddler room bathroom, where cobwebs and accumulations of dust and dirt was observed on windowsills and the nappy changing area.
- There was a strong malodour in the hall entering the toddler wobbler pre-school room.
- There was a large hole in wall of the entrance hall.
- The outdoor areas required cleaning. A number of items that were not suitable for preschool children were stored in the outdoor areas. This included Christmas decorations, metal piping, boxes of materials.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

- (1) A new radiator was purchased and installed to ensure the heat in our sleep room is within the regulated temperature management will ensure the team are carrying out their daily indoor checklists, their sleep checks and the health and safety of the children will remain paramount.
- (2) The sleep room was treated and repainted. Management will ensure the team are carrying out their daily indoor checklists and the health and safety of the children will remain paramount.
- (3) The sleep room was treated and repainted. Management will ensure the team are carrying out their daily indoor checklists and the health and safety of the children will remain paramount.
- (4) The sleep room was treated and repainted. Management will ensure the team are carrying out their daily indoor checklists and the health and safety of the children will remain paramount.
- (5) Cleaned the blocked trap and the washed the drains. Management will ensure the team are carrying out their daily indoor checklists and the health and safety of the children will remain paramount
- (6) The hole was filled and painted. Management will ensure the team are carrying out their daily indoor checklists and the health and safety of the children will remain paramount.
- (7) The Toddler yard was cleaned and decluttered. Management will ensure the team are carrying out their daily outdoor checklists and the health and safety of the children will remain paramount.
- (8) The service was cleaned daily following all our room checklists. Management will ensure the team are carrying out their daily cleaning checklists.

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Supporting documentation submitted

- (1) Photographic evidence submitted.
- (2) Photographic evidence submitted.
- (3) Photographic evidence submitted.
- (4) Photographic evidence submitted.
- (5) Photographic evidence submitted.
- (6) Photographic evidence submitted.
- (7) Photographic evidence submitted.
- (8) Photographic evidence submitted.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified under regulation 29 has been adequately addressed.