

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015DL052				
Name of Service:	Aurora's Hobbits Ltd				
Address of Service:	Aveltygort, Crossroads, Killygordon, Co. Donegal				
Eircode:	F93 X9YA				
Name of Registered Provider:	Aurora McAllynn				
Service type:	Full Day				
Date of Inspection:	11/09/2025				
No of pre-school children:	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>AM</td> <td>35</td> <td>PM</td> <td>29</td> </tr> </table>	AM	35	PM	29
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	<p>Early Years Inspectorate, TUSLA Child & Family Agency, Markievicz House, Barrack St, Sligo, F91 XC84</p>				
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

Not Applicable.

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 12 adults employed in the service, On the day of inspection eight adults worked directly with the preschool children. There is also one cleaning staff, a janitor and a cook. The registered provider works in an administrative capacity and provides relief as required.

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

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9, 10,11,16K,23,24,25,27,31, and 32 however, on inspection additional non-compliance which posed a risk was identified under Regulation 29. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 16 (1) (k) (h) and regulation 24 in all three of the care rooms being utilized on the day of inspection.

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.

Additional Information

1. This inspection was unannounced and was triggered by information received by the inspectorate.
2. An Immediate Action Notice was issued under Regulation 23: General Safety, due to an unsecured window in the outdoor play area that posed a potential risk of injury to children. A response was received and accepted on the 12th of September please see body of the report.

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

(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.

(3) The procedures specified in paragraph (2) shall be carried out prior to any person being appointed, assigned or allowed access to or contact with a child attending the pre-school service.

(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).

There was a designated person in charge and a named person to deputise on the day of inspection.

(2) (a) (b).

Following a review of previous inspection information, the record of 12 adults were reviewed. From information available on inspection and discussion with the person in charge it was determined that two new staff members had been employed since the previous inspection is the focus of this review.

The following vetting information was available for two adults:

(a)(b) Four written and verified references from past employers were available for the two adults.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for two staff members. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) International police vetting was not required for one adult as they had not lived outside the state for a period of six consecutive months.

(4)

The two adults had attained major awards in Early childhood care and education at level 5 or above on the national framework of qualifications, or qualifications deemed by Department of Children, Disability and Equality (DCDE) to meet the regulatory requirement.

Non-Compliance Information

(2) (d)

It could not be ascertained if international police vetting was required for one of the adults as no history of employment was available for review. This was identified as a non-compliance on previous inspections and actions put in place failed to prevent a reoccurrence.

(3)

A review of documentation evidenced that the requirements of Regulation 9(2) had not been completed prior to one staff member being appointed, assigned, or allowed access to or contact with a child attending the preschool service as outlined above under point 2(d)

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

In a written response the registered provider stated:

(2) (d)

The Registered Provider has received the staff member's CV, which had been missing from the file. Going forward, staff CVs will be maintained in all files, and staff documentation will be reviewed annually to confirm all required documents are present.

(3)

For any new employees, CVs will be checked and validated prior to commencement of employment to ensure they are the most recent version, up to date, and contain no unexplained gaps.

Supporting documentation submitted

Copy of CV

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 9 has been adequately addressed and will be reviewed on next inspection.

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

For the purpose of this inspection, a sample of the required written policies, procedures and statements that are specified and required under schedule 5 of these regulations were submitted prior to the inspection to the feedback and concerns team.

The following policies, procedures and statements were included as part of this inspection:

- The complaints policy
- The accident and incident policy
- The authorisation to collect policy

Documentation reviewed evidenced that the above policies were available and in operation in the service

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)

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:

- (c) details of the adult:child ratios in the service.
- (d) the type of care or programme provided in the service:
- (f) The opening hours and fees;
- (h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis;
- (k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.

Compliance Information

- (1) The Registered provider demonstrated a record was held in relation to:
- (c) details of the adult: child ratios.
 - (d) The type of care provided.
 - (f) The opening hours and fees.

Non-Compliance Information

(1)(h)

Attendance records were not accurately recorded in all three rooms in the service as evidence on the week of the 1st of September and week of the 8th of September, including the day of inspection.

(k)

The service had two methods of recording accidents and incidents. This included a logbook in each room and an accident and incident form. On a sample review of the log inconsistencies arose, where on separate dates within four-week period children had been recorded as injuring their head in the logbook, however no accident and incident form was completed. This is at variance with the service policy. This non-compliance was identified on the services last inspection and actions put in place by the registered provider failed to prevent a reoccurrence.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

In a written response the registered provider stated:

(1) (h)

Attendance records were checked by management and corrected that day. The manager will ensure leaders are filling out the attendance sheets in a timely manner. All staff received staff training on attendance sheets at our staff meeting on the 30.09.2025.

(K)

We accept that there were discrepancies between the log and reports. All staff received staff training on accidents and incidents at our staff meeting on the 30.09.2025.

Supporting documentation submitted

Agenda from team meeting where accident and incidents were discussed.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 16 (h) (k) has been adequately addressed and will be reviewed on next inspection.

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.
- Cleaning products and equipment were stored out of the reach of children.
- The handle on internal doors in the main building were fitted out of reach of the child, preventing unauthorised exit from the rooms.
- The staircase was fitted with a non-slip reflective strip to guide children safely up the steps

Infection Control:

- Children were observed to wash their hands regularly including before snacks and meals.
- Child friendly hand wash posters with picture instructions were placed above the wash basins.

Safe Sleep:

- The service had a designated sleep room with appropriate cots available to children.
- Sleep checks were observed to occur every ten minutes.

- The Sleep room temperature was recorded at 18.9 °C on the day of inspection, within the acceptable range of 16 to 20°C.
- Cellular blankets were available and in use on the day of inspection.

Fire Safety:

- Fire doors remained unobstructed on the day of the inspection.
- Fire evacuation plans were clearly displayed on the walls in the care room.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

The registered provider did not ensure that reasonable measures were taken to safeguard the , safety of children in attendance as follows:

1. The natural play area, had a number of hazards posing a risk to the safety of the preschool child including:
 - unsecure railings on ladder leading to a slide.
 - Unsecure base of a wooden climbing frame leading to a drop.
 - A small table had evidence of wear and tear with exposed splinters.
 - Shock absorbent mats located under the swings were torn and damaged reducing their effectiveness.
 - Electrical extension cables with plugs were in easy reach of the preschool child in the climbing area. This was identified as a non-compliance on the service last inspection.
2. A wooden castle in an outdoor area was damaged with broken steps and base. The service had made attempts to secure this area with tyres that was ineffective to prevent preschool children accessing this area.
3. An immediate action notice was given on the day of the inspection in relation to an unsecure window in the outdoor play area posing an immediate risk to the safety of the child if it fell. It is acknowledged that the Registered provider rectified this issue on the 12th of September 2025.
4. An accessible window did not have the required restrictor in operation leading to a drop which posed a safety risk to the preschool child.

Infection Control:

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

5. 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.

6. Infant formula was observed to be prepared on site in the care room. This is in contradiction to the food safety guidance where it states if a service chooses to prepare formula on site there must be a dedicated, clean and suitable area (kitchen, milk kitchen or separate dedicated area) for preparing and handling Prepared infant formula.
7. The outdoor play area was not maintained in a safe manner litter and used tissues were observed in one outdoor play area.

Administration of Medication:

8. Practices surrounding the storage of medications were at variance with the policy in place in the service. This posed a risk of harm or overdose to the children receiving the medication as follows:
 - Medications were not in the original packaging, clearly labelled with the name of the child, storage instructions dosage and name of the health care provider.
 - Medication was stored in an unlocked fridge accessible to the preschool child.
 - Creams were stored in the first aid box.

Non-compliance in relation to the storage of medication was identified on the service last inspection in April 2025 and the actions taken by the registered provider failed to prevent a reoccurrence.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. The park area was cleaned. Unsecure railings on ladder leading to a slide fixed. The unsecure base of a wooden climbing frame leading to a drop fixed. A small table had evidence of wear and tear with exposed splinters was removed. Shock absorbent mats located under the swings were torn and damaged reducing their effectiveness was removed. Electrical extension cables with plugs were in easy reach of the preschool child in the climbing area were removed.
2. The wooden castle in an outdoor area that was damaged with broken steps and base and were fixed
3. The window was removed on 12th September 2025 after immediate action notice was given.
4. All windows were checked after inspection and secured. The leaders will ensure the area is cleaned and maintained following our outdoor checklists.

Infection Control:

5. Nappy changing units and mats were thoroughly cleaned. The leaders will ensure that the areas are cleaned thoroughly daily and signed off on their cleaning sheets.

6. We no longer make up infant formula. We accept that the policy wasn't followed on the day of the inspection, staff has received training on our policy with bottles. The staff have handed out a copy of our policy to parents to ensure the parents are following our policy on bottles in the service.
7. The area was cleaned. The leaders will ensure the area is cleaned and maintained following our outdoor checklists.

Administration of Medication:

8. We requested a label for the medication. The fridge lock was fixed. The arnica cream was removed from our first aid box as requested. The leaders will ensure the fridges lock are checked and working, this was communicated to the staff members at our monthly meeting on the 30.09.2025

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

1. Photographic evidence submitted.
2. Photographic evidence submitted.
3. Outdoor checklist submitted.
4. The agenda form team meeting where this was discussed.

Infection Control:

5. Photographic evidence submitted.
6. The agenda form team meeting where this was discussed.
7. Photographic evidence submitted.

Administration of Medication:

8. Photographic evidence submitted of medication bottle with Label and lock on fridge.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 23 has been adequately addressed and will be reviewed on next inspection.

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.

(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.

Compliance Information

(3) (a)(b)

The registered provider ensured that a record was maintained of all persons entering the building. This record included all required information as set out in the regulations.

Non-Compliance Information

(1)

Documentation reviewed during the inspection evidenced that all preschool children were not checked in and out of the service as required. Attendance records in the wobbler room were reviewed by the inspector and there was no record available for the 4th and 5th of September of any child checked in or out of the service. Similarly attendance records reviewed in the ECCE room evidenced no children being checked in or out for the week of the 1st of September 2025. Inaccurate records of attendance may hinder the safe evacuation of children in the event of an emergency.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

In a written response the registered provider stated:

The attendance records were checked by management and corrected that day of inspection. The manager will ensure the leaders are filling out the attendance sheets in a timely manner. All staff received staff training on attendance sheets at our staff meeting on the 30.09. 2025.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence of attendance records.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 24 has been adequately addressed and will be reviewed on next inspection.

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) The registered provider demonstrated with certification that a person trained in first aid for children was available at all times while children attend the preschool service.

(2)(a) There was a first aid box clearly visible to staff in all three care rooms.

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

- In the outdoor play area children were supervised mainly by sight as the adults caring for them positioned themselves to ensure all children were in view. In the care rooms where adults worked in teams, they were observed to communicate well ensuring that all children could be always supervised.
- Mealtimes were observed to be a pleasant experience for children, where the adults sat beside the children encouraging to try meals and offering support if children required assistance.

Non-Compliance Information

Contrary to the service policy on outdoor play 'staff members should ensure their presence and position in the outdoor play area allows that all areas in the outdoor area are under constant supervision and that all children are in sight of at least one member of staff'. In a review of documentation and on discussion with adults present at the time of an incident notified to the inspectorate, the adults supervising were unable to determine whether a child had fallen of a bike, fallen in the play area or picked at a scab resulting in an injury to a child.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

In a written response the registered provider stated:

The staff supervise the children by sight positioning themselves to ensure all children are in view in the outdoor area. This was communicated to the staff members at our monthly meeting on the 30.09.2025

Supporting documentation submitted

Agenda for team meeting submitted where this is on the agenda to be addressed.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 27 has been adequately addressed and will be reviewed on next inspection.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

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

(c) kept adequately lit, heated and ventilated

(d) cleaned, maintained and repaired, as required, and

Non-Compliance Information

(c)

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.

(d)

Areas of the premises were found not to be cleaned, maintained and repaired as required during the inspection as detailed below:

- The ECCE sanitary facilities had large accumulations of a build-up of dirt and dust around wash basins and floors.
- Evidence of peeling paint in the sanitary accommodation in the ECCE room.
- The first aid box in the ECCE room had layers of dust accumulations.
- There was a hole in the sanitary accommodation of the dining room leading to exposed pipes and insulation material which required to be secured.

Non-compliance in relation to the service cleanliness and maintenance were identified on the services last inspection and actions submitted by the registered provider failed to prevent a reoccurrence.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

In a written response the registered provider stated:

(c)

The black substance in the sleep room of the baby room was cleaned and painted. The leaders will ensure the sleep room facilities is clean and checked following their cleaning sheets.

(d)

The ECCE sanitary facilities were cleaned. The first aid box in the ECCE room was cleaned. The sanitary accommodation of the dining room was fixed. The leaders will ensure the ECCE sanitary facilities is clean and checked following their cleaning sheets.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence of sleep room painted.

Cleaning check list submitted.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 29 has been adequately addressed and will be reviewed on next inspection.

Part VIII - Notifications and Complaints

Regulation 31 - Notification of incidents

A registered provider shall notify the Agency in writing within 3 working days of becoming aware of any of the following incidents occurring in the preschool service:

(d) a serious injury to a pre-school child while attending the service that requires immediate medical treatment by a registered medical practitioner whether in a hospital or otherwise;

Compliance Information

(d)
The Registered provider confirmed that the person trained in first aid for children assessed an injury and advised that it did not require immediate medical treatment, therefore no notification to the inspectorate was required.

Part VIII - Notifications and Complaints

Regulation 32 – Complaints

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that the complaints policy of the service specifies-

- (a) the procedure to be followed by a person for the purposes of making a complaint in relation to the service,*
- (b) the manner in which such a complaint shall be dealt with, and*
- (c) the procedures for keeping a person who makes such a complaint informed of the manner in which it is being dealt with.*

(2) A registered provider shall ensure that-

- (a) a record in writing is kept of a complaint made to the provider in respect of the pre-school service, and*
- (b) the complaint is duly dealt with in accordance with the provider's complaints policy.*

(3) A record in writing referred to in paragraph (2)(a) shall-

- (a) include the nature of the complaint and the manner in which the complaint was dealt with, and*

(b) be open to inspection on the premises by an authorised person.

Compliance Information

(1) A complaints policy was in place in the service and adequately outlined the following;

(a) Details of the procedure to be followed by a person for the purposes of making a complaint in relation to the service.

(b) Details of the manner by which a complaint will be dealt with by the service.

(c) Details of the procedures in place outlining how the person who makes such a complaint in relation to the service will be informed of the manner by which the complaint is being dealt with.

(2) (a) (b) The person in charge stated that no complaints had been made directly to the service since the last date of inspection on the 30th of April 2025.

(3) (a)(b)

The person in charge stated they are aware of their obligation to detail the nature of any complaint made and the manner in which it will be dealt with. The person in charge stated a record of any complaint made will be kept in the service and available for inspection on the premises.