

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 McCormick
-------------------------------------	------------------

Service type:	Full Day
----------------------	----------

Date of Inspection:	22/10/2024
----------------------------	------------

No of pre-school children:	AM	52	PM	40
-----------------------------------	----	----	----	----

Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate TUSLA Child & Family Agency Suite 7, Vista Primary Care, Ballymore Eustace Road, Naas, Co. Kildare W91 X38W
Inspection undertaken by:	F. Maher, T. Duignan
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 and education 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. Three pre-school rooms are located in a two-storey building, two on the ground floor and one on the first floor and a fourth pre-school room is located in a building at the rear of the private dwelling. A sleep room, kitchen and office are also provided and a standalone modular unit, located to the front of the premises, is the staff room. Several play areas are located to the front and side of the premises.

Staffing

There were fourteen adults present in the service on the day of the inspection, this included 10 adults working directly with the children, the registered provider, two cleaning staff that arrived to the service at 10:30am and the cook.

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.

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. A written immediate action notice under Regulation 9 – Management and Recruitment was issued to the registered provider on 22 October 2024.
2. A written response was submitted by the registered provider on 23 October 2024 outlining the measures taken to address the immediate concern.

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
- (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.

(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.

(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

(1)(a)

There was a designated person in charge and a named person to deputise as required.

(b) The named person in charge remained on the premises for the duration of the inspection.

The files of fourteen adults employed were reviewed on inspection.

(2)(a)(b)

Two written and verified past employer references or references from a reputable source other than a past employer, were available in respect of eight adults employed.

One written and verified past employer reference or a reference from a reputable source other than a past employer, was available in respect of four adults employed.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for eleven staff. However, the service did not adhere to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years. Please refer to the information outlined under regulation 23 of this report.

(d) Police vetting was available for two adults who had lived in a state other than the State for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months.

(4)

Ten employed childcare staff members working directly with pre-school children attending the service held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 on the National Framework of Qualifications or a qualification deemed equivalent by the Minister.

(7)(a)

There was documentary evidence that regular staff meetings had taken place, the last meeting was dated 4 October 2024, the agenda included various items for discussion relevant to the service.

Non-Compliance Information

(2)(a), (b)

Two written and verified past employer references or references from a reputable source in the absence of a past employer reference were not available in respect of two adults employed in the service whose records were reviewed.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures were unavailable for three adults employed by the service.

(3)

The procedures specified in paragraph (2) had not been completed prior to seven persons being appointed, assigned or allowed access to or contact with a child attending the pre-school service following review of the staff records on the day of inspection.

(4)

There was no documentary evidence provided to state that one employed adult, working directly with children in the service, held at least a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 or equivalent on the National Framework of Qualifications.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective Action

(2)(a)(b)

Two written and verified past employer references from a reputable source have been obtained for two staff.

(c)

Three Garda vetting disclosures have been obtained for three adults employed by the service.

(3)

Before commencing with us we will follow Tulsa guidelines that all staff have their two written and verified past employer references or references from a reputable source moving forward.

(4)

The staff member has obtained a copy of the qualification.

Preventive Action

We will follow Tulsa guidelines and our policies

Supporting documentation submitted

Documents X 8

Summary Comment

Following review of the submitted evidence, response to the immediate action notice issued 22 October 2024 and the written assurance from the registered provider in relation to recruitment of staff going forward, the requirement for Regulation 9 (2) (a)(b)(c), (3) and (4) has been met.

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 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)
There were 52 children attending the service being supervised directly by 10 adults.
- (2)
The minimum ratio of adults to children was adhered to during the day.
- (8)(a)
There were at least two adults on the premises at all times for the duration of the Inspection. This was confirmed following review of the staff roster for the service.

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:

(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.

Compliance Information

(1)(i)

The staff roster was available for inspection and included the rostered hours of work for all staff members.

(j)

A sample size of seven administration of medication forms were reviewed and contained the necessary information detailing the child's name, date and time, medicine and amount administered, parental consent and staff signatures.

Non-Compliance Information

(k)

A sample size of 10 accident and incident forms were reviewed.

There was inadequate information documented on the forms as follows,

- The child's full name and the full name of the staff present were not completed.
- The signature of the staff member completing the forms was absent.
- There was no evidence that management reviewed or signed the forms.
- The location of the incident or the number of children present was not documented on the form.
- There was no evidence if a risk assessment was completed following any of the incidents documented.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

We have amended our accident forms.

Preventive Action

We will follow Tulsa guidelines and our policies. There be regular policy knowledge refresh for staff and regular oversight from management to ensure staff are aware of their role and responsibilities in relation to accident and incident policy.

Supporting documentation submitted

Document X 1

Summary Comment

Following review by the inspector of the stated actions and evidence submitted the non-compliance identified under Regulation 16(1)(i) has been adequately addressed.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 21 – Equipment and materials

A registered provider shall ensure that there is adequate and suitable furniture, play and work equipment and materials available on the premises of the pre-school service.

Compliance Information

There was a variety of age and developmentally appropriate toys, materials and equipment available in the pre-school rooms for the children to use and play with throughout the day. Low level open shelving units displaying the pre-school materials and equipment, ensured the resources were freely available and easily accessible to the children at all times.

Specialist equipment provided for one child in the Baby room was observed being used during the day to facilitate and promote the child's gross motor development.

Following the last inspection, 14 March/June 2023, the tables and chairs have been replaced in the Toddler room ensuring the children can sit comfortably for tabletop activities and when eating their snack.

The resources and materials in the pre-school rooms facilitated all types of play and learning and encouraged fine and gross motor development activities. The children were observed engaged, active and involved throughout the day as they chose their play and learning materials and used the various interest areas.

The three outdoor areas were well resourced with bicycles, trikes, scooters, climbing multi activity frames, swings, wooden see saw, balance beams and wobble balance beams. Children spent long periods of time playing in the outdoor spaces and covered areas ensured that they could be outside during inclement weather.

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 door to the service was secured with an electronic release system and was controlled by the staff to prevent children from exiting the service unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the pre-school. The doors to each pre-school room had high level door handles which were out of reach of the children. The toddler room door was secured on the inside with a high-level slide bolt mechanism ensuring the safety of the children within.

Staff members advised the inspectors they immediately cut/chop any food that may pose a choking risk to a child at snack and mealtimes.

Daily outdoor risk assessments were carried out and documentary evidence was available for inspection. The service met the necessary safety requirements in respect of the toys and play materials.

Infection Control:

Thermostatically controlled hot water, liquid hand soap and paper hand towel, hygienically dispensed from wall mounted units, were readily available for hygienic hand washing and drying and handwashing routines were well established and observed.

Foot pedal operated bins were provided for the disposal of soiled nappies, used tissues, paper towel and waste. Cleaning schedules were in place and maintained. Cleaning staff were observed attending to cleaning duties in the pre-school rooms from 10:30am.

Administration of Medication:

Medication was not given at the time of the inspection, written parental consent was available should medication be required to be administered to a child.

Safe Sleep:

The staff members, caring for sleeping children, in conversation with the inspector, advised that ten-minute sleep checks were recorded to check the colour, position and breathing pattern of sleeping children, this practice was observed being carried out during the inspectors' time spent in the baby room when children were sleeping in the cots provided.

The sleep room environmental temperature was maintained between 16°C - 20°C to ensure a comfortable and safe sleeping environment for the children, the ambient temperature of the room was recorded at 17.9°C at 12:11pm when two children were sleeping.

Fire Safety:

Monthly fire drills had been carried out and staff members were familiar with fire safety evacuation procedures from the service. The fire exits were easily recognisable and not obstructed.

Outings:

Outings are conducted and operational procedures are in place.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. Garda vetting was available for fourteen staff members. However, four vetting disclosures were not dated within the previous three years in adherence to with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice 'EYI-RN12.3 Renewal of Garda Vetting'.
2. Daily indoor room risk assessments were not being completed to identify and mitigate the risk to children from any hazards observed.
3. A cupboard in Aragon room with hazardous items was observed to be unsecured and was accessible to the children.
4. Toddler room
 - The wooden radiator cover, located beside the entrance door, had become detached from the wall; this posed a potential risk of injury to a child due to its instability should it fall forward onto a child.
 - The plywood inserts on the wooden radiator cover located under the window was damaged with exposed jagged edges; this was accessible to a child and posed a risk to a child of a scrape injury.
 - Light fittings in both toilet cubicles in the sanitary area did not have covers fitted; this created a risk of injury to a pre-school child in the event of a light bulb shattering.

Infection Control:

5. The nappy changing practices observed for three nappy changes completed, posed a risk of cross infection as evidenced by the following observations:
 - A single use disposable apron was not worn at one nappy change.
 - Single use disposable gloves and the single use disposable apron, when worn for subsequent nappy changes, were not removed at the point that the soiled nappy and used cleaning material were bagged up

prior to being disposed of. The soiled gloves remained in place when dressing the child and washing the child's hands.

Fire Safety:

- It is acknowledged monthly fire drills are carried out, however, the fire alarm is not activated to alert staff and children to evacuate, instead, the registered provider uses a whistle to alert each room. As the children are not familiar with the sound of the wired alarm, this has the potential to cause confusion and frighten some children in the event the alarm is triggered in real time.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective Action

General Safety:

- Three staff member disclosures have since returned and we are awaiting our other one to date.
- We have created a daily indoor room risk assessments to identify and mitigate the risk to children from any hazards observed.
- We have removed any hazardous items and secured our cupboard in Aragorn room.
- Both wooden radiator covers have been removed to ensure there is no potential risk of injury to a child. Both light fittings in the toilet cubicles in the sanitary area have been changed and are LED lights.

Preventive Action

- We will follow Tulsa guidelines and our policies.
- 2/3/4. We will hold regular management checks to ensure daily risk assessments are being completed and any safety issues promptly dealt with.

Infection Control:

- Since the inspection all staff have been reminded of our nappy changing policies and I have been carrying out checks to insure they are correctly following our policies.

Preventive Action

- There will be regular policy knowledge refresh for staff.

Fire Safety:

- Since the inspection we have downloaded a fire alarm sound, similar to ours and we are working on increasing the volume of it so we can carry out our fire drills using our wired alarm next month for our monthly fire drills.

Preventive Action

- All fire evacuation drills will always be triggered by the wired fire alarm bell going forward.

The fire alarm system will be checked as per service contract to ensure it is in working order.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

Documents X 2

Photographs X 3

Fire Safety:

Documents X 2

Summary Comment

The actions taken by the registered provider address 5 of the 6 non-compliances identified. The findings documented at point 1 remain non-compliant as one document in relation to a garda re-vetting disclosure remains outstanding for one staff member.

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) Two staff members were trained in First Aid Response (FAR) and were immediately available to the children attending the service.

(2)

(a) The first aid equipment was safely stored, in conspicuous positions in the pre-school.

(b) Suitably equipped first aid boxes were available at all times to the children attending 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 firefighting 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.

Compliance Information

(1)(a)

A record in writing was kept of all fire drills that took place in the premises. The last recorded fire drill was dated 8 October 2024.

Non-Compliance Information

(b)

1. There was no documentary evidence available for the maintenance of the smoke/fire detection system in the pre-school.
 2. The firefighting equipment was last serviced July 2023 and was out of date.
- (4)
3. A notice detailing the procedures to be followed in the event of fire was not displayed in the service.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective Action

- 1./2. Since the inspection we have obtained maintenance certification for both.
3. Since the inspection we have erected new signs

Preventive Action

- 1./2. There is a service contract in place to ensure timely servicing of the fire equipment and alarms/smoke detection system.
3. As the registered provider and Fire Officer in the service my duty is to ensure the fire signage indoors and outdoors is up to date.

Supporting documentation submitted

Documents X 2

Photographs X 2

Summary Comment

Following review by the inspector of the stated actions and evidence submitted the non-compliances identified under Regulation 26(1)(b), (4) have been adequately addressed.

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*
- (e) equipped with adequate and suitable sanitary facilities.*

Compliance Information

(e)
Additional nappy changing facilities have been installed in the Toddler room to cater for the number of children requiring nappy changing attending the room since the last inspection 14 March/June 2023.

Non-Compliance Information

- (c)
1. There was no ventilation provided in the additional nappy change area located in the Toddler room, as a result, the air was stale and malodorous.
 2. There was a strong malodour in the two toilet cubicles located in Aragon room.
- (d)
3. It is acknowledged cleaning staff have been employed since the last inspection, 14 March/June 2023, however, a build-up of dust and cobwebs were observed in both toilet cubicles and on the surface grid of both mechanical ventilation units in the cubicles in the sanitary area of Aragon room.
 4. The wall adjacent to the sink unit in the Toddler room was very marked and stained and had various areas of peeling paint work; this area required repainting for effective cleaning.
 5. Part of the plasterwork in the Toddler sanitary area had a floor to ceiling crack and a second area of the plaster work had not been repaired/repainted following the removal of a wooden beam.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

1. We have added a new ventilation system to our nappy change area.
2. We have created air vents to allow the air to circulate freely.

3. We have cleaned this area, and it is free from dust and cobwebs and the mechanical ventilation units in the cubicles in the sanitary area are working.

4./5. We have tidied up the walls

Preventive Action

1. The new ventilation unit been added to a daily/weekly checklist that it is functioning.
2. All staff have been advised to regularly check the area and report any concerns regarding the ventilation.
3. This area has been added to the daily cleaning check list and regular review by management to ensure area maintained in clean condition
- 4./5. All staff have been reminded to report any maintenance issues observed for prompt action by management.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographs X 5

Summary Comment

The actions taken by the registered provider address 4 of the 5 non-compliances identified, however, the findings documented at point 1 remain non-compliant as further evidence/documentation was requested 25 November 2024 to determine completion of this action; no further evidence was submitted.