

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015MH076
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Name of Service:	Home from Home Daycare
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Address of Service:	Curragha Rd, Ratoath, Co. Meath
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Eircode:	A85 PP29
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Name of Registered Provider:	Lesley Harkin
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Service type:	Full Day, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	23/02/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	51	PM	44
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	180-189 Lakeshore Drive, Airside Business Park, Swords, Co Dublin K67 Y5C6
Inspection undertaken by:	AM Coyle & Y Kelly
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.
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Description of service

Home from Home Daycare is a privately-owned childcare service located on the outskirts of the village of Ratoath, Co Meath accommodating pre-school children aged 1-6 years on a sessional, part-time and full day care basis. The service is registered to cater for a maximum of 80 pre-school children from 7.30am to 6.30pm each weekday, with eligible pre-school children facilitated to participate in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme from 9.30am to 12.30pm for 38 weeks each year. There are 5 care rooms in the service the Wobbler room 1, Wobbler room 2 and Toddler room are located on the ground floor with ECCE year 1 room and the ECCE year 2 room situated on the first floor. An outdoor play area is located to the rear of the service in addition to an enclosed outdoor space located immediately adjacent to the Wobbler 2 room.

Staffing

The registered provider employs a service manager to oversee the operational management of the service, supporting a staff team of twelve, eleven of whom work directly with the children and a full-time chef. One staff members post was part funded through the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) scheme to reduce the adult to child ratio and if necessary to work with a child with additional needs during the ECCE session. Two students on work experience placement were present in the service on the day of inspection. The registered provider was not present in the service on the day of inspection and does not work directly with the children attending the service.

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, 11,19,22,23,25 and 26; These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

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.

Acknowledgments

The inspectors wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the service manager, 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.

(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) The service had a designated person in charge and a named person to deputise as required.

(b) The designated person in charge was present and in charge of the service when the inspectors arrived unannounced on the morning of the inspection.

(c) A management structure was in place, which was clearly identifiable through review of the staff roster, a staff display board and through discussion with the staff team.

Nine staff files were reviewed which included the files for 2 students who were present on work experience placement in the service. The files for the remaining staff members had been reviewed at the previous inspection of the service and met the regulatory requirement. One student worked as a core staff member on the afternoon of inspection.

(2)(a) Ten validated written references were available from a past employer.

(b) Eight validated written references were available from a source other than a past employer.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures were available for the 9 staff members whose files were reviewed. All staff Garda vetting records were reviewed and demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(4) The core staff members who worked directly with the pre-school children in the service held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 - 8 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

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 staff members working directly with the children attending the service.

(2) The adult to child ratios were correct in the service when the inspectors arrived unannounced to the service and remained so throughout the inspection.

The following adult to child ratios were observed during the inspection:

- In the Wobbler room 1 there were 9 children aged 1 year 2 months to 1 year 11 months being cared for by 2 staff members.
- In the Wobbler room 2 there were 5 children aged 1 year 4 months to 1 year 8 months being cared for by 1 staff member.
- In the Toddler room there were 15 children aged 2 years to 2 years 10 months being cared for by 3 staff members.
- In the ECCE Year 1 room there were 13 children aged 3 years 2 months to 3 years 11 months being cared for by 3 staff members one of whom was employed for 3 hours each day to reduce the adult to child ratio,

and to work directly with children with additional needs, when necessary, in a post funded by the Minister as part of the Access and Inclusion Model scheme.

- In ECCE Year 2 room there were 9 children aged 4 years 3 months to 5 years being cared for by 1 staff member.

(8)(a) The registered provider ensured that 2 adults were present on the premises at all times, as evidenced in staff rosters and staff attendance records maintained in the service.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 19 - Health, welfare and development of child

(1) A registered provider shall, in providing a pre-school service, ensure that-

(a) each child's learning, development and well-being is facilitated within the daily life of the pre-school service through the provision of the appropriate activities, interaction, materials and equipment, having regard to the age and stage of development of the child, and

Compliance Information

(1)(a) The following observations are examples on how each child's learning, development and well-being was observed being facilitated during the inspection:

Basic needs:

- The children's independence was encouraged for example children who were able fed themselves, used the toilet independently and some children put on and took off their own clothing. Children's nappies were changed at scheduled times and more frequently as required. The children who were toilet trained were supported to use the toilet as needed and were gently reminded as needed to wash their hands.
- The children in the Wobbler room 1 were placed to sleep when they exhibited signs of tiredness and slept in either of the 2 sleep rooms on the ground floor of the service and if their sleep times coincided with mealtimes the children were provided with their meals when they woke up. The children attending the Wobbler room 2 and the Toddler room were placed to sleep after dinner in cots in the sleep rooms adjacent to the care rooms. Children aged over 2 years in the service who required sleep slept on stackable beds in the Toddler room and ECCE year 1 room after they had their dinner.
- There was a healthy eating policy in place in the service and healthy meals and snacks were provided for the children by the service at regular intervals throughout the day. The children attending the service on a sessional basis brought their own snack with them from home.

- The children attending the Toddler room, ECCE Year 1 room and the ECCE Year 2 room enjoyed time in the outdoor areas located to the side and rear of the service during the inspection.

Supporting relationships around children:

- The parents and children in the individual care rooms were observed to be greeted warmly on arrival to the service. The staff members were observed to take the opportunity to provide verbal feedback to the parents when they collected their children.
- The service used a software technology application to provide information to parents in relation to updates on eating, nappy changes, activities and sleep on a daily basis.
- In the ECCE year 1 room and the ECCE year 2 room the children's family photographs were displayed on the wall in addition to family books that were available with a range of photographs of the children and their families which the children were observed to share with each other and enjoy. This enabled the children to maintain links and bridge the gap between the service and home.
- The inspectors observed the children in the ECCE year 1 room and the ECCE year 2 room to be engaged in activities that were planned based on the children's interests or which the children had chosen themselves. Staff paid close attention to children's emerging interests and kept note of this information to incorporate when planning the weekly curriculum of activities. The staff members in each room were observed to build the children's confidence by praising and encouraging their involvement in activities and on completion of tasks.

Physical and material environment:

- The care rooms were spacious and provided space for the children's free movement and to enable the children to engage and interact with the play materials that were available on low-level shelves. This facilitated choice and supported the children's independence.
- The wobbler room 1 which accommodated the youngest children attending the service had ample space and provided the children with the opportunity to move freely around the care room. The children were observed to enjoy spending time playing in the rest area which consisted of an area with soft mats and a ball pool.
- The ECCE room 1 and the ECCE room 2 were laid out with designated areas of interest including well developed home areas including kitchen areas with a wide selection of open-ended materials for the children to extend their play. Additionally dress up materials, dolls with a variety of clothes, well supplied

shop areas all facilitated the children’s imaginary play experiences. In both care rooms an emphasis was placed on the local community with pictures of local schools and local services displayed. A wide range of tabletop materials and jigsaws were also available for the children to use. The children were observed to be facilitated and well supported in their play of choice.

- Sensory play was supported in each of the care rooms through the provision of materials including paint, dried lentils and rice.
- A range of books were available in the library areas in the care rooms which provided choice and supported children’s language development. This was further enhanced through reading stories and singing with the children.
- Children’s artwork decorated the walls in the care rooms.
- An enclosed outdoor area was provided to the rear of the service which was divided into 3 separate areas all of which were surfaced with grass and had a variety of play equipment provided. The largest grassy section contained a large wooden climbing frame with 2 swings and 2 slides attached, a separate swing set, a seesaw, a mature willow tunnel, balance beams, logs and tyres. The second grassy section contained a plastic climbing frame, 2 swings, a slide, self-propel cars and an outdoor kitchen. The third grassy section was designated for use by the youngest children attending the service and contained a low-level plastic climbing frame with slide attached, a plastic playhouse, ride-on toys and sit in self-propel cars. Additionally, a covered outdoor play space was provided immediately adjacent to the Wobbler room 2. The area was surfaced with safety tiles, a slide and sensory container were available in the area and the staff members informed the inspector that they brought play materials outside based on the children’s interests.

Non-Compliance Information

Basic needs:

1. In the Wobbler room 1 and Wobbler room 2 the children’s water bottles were not freely available to the children as they were stored in a box on a windowsill and on the radiator out of sight and reach of the children. This prevented the children from taking a drink spontaneously if they were thirsty during the day, without the assistance of a staff member.
2. Before dinner time in the Wobbler room 1 two children had their shoes and leggings removed before they ate their dinner, when asked the staff member stated that this was being done to speed up the process of placing the children to sleep after they ate. This practice does not support the dignity of the children.

Supporting relationships around children:

3. The family photographs that were on display in the Wobbler room 1 and Wobbler room 2 were positioned at too high a level for the children to see. A child in the Wobbler room 2 climbed on a chair to try and retrieve the family photograph, the child was told to get down off the chair. The positioning of the photographs does not enable the children to develop a sense of belonging and connectedness in the service and to maintain links with family and home. Furthermore, this does not support conversation with the child and enhancement of the child's language development.
4. Staff were not observed to sit with children at dinner time in the Toddler room. This did not support a relaxed atmosphere and social interaction among the children and adults at mealtimes.
5. In the Wobbler room 2, 3 children were observed to be playing at the water tray, the children showed signs of being engaged in their play, however the lid was put on the tray, and the children were taken over to the table to do another activity. This does not support the voice of the child or follow child's interests by reading children's cues.

Physical and material environment:

6. There was no additional equipment readily available to the children in the Wobbler room 1 to use with the play kitchen. The play resources for use with the kitchen were stored on pull out shelves which the majority of children in the room were not developmentally able to retrieve.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective Action

Basic needs:

1. Water bottles have been moved to a more reachable spot. Area was labelled with a large A4 page reading 'Water Station' with pictures of water bottles so the children know where their water is. This was applied to both rooms.
2. Staff have been advised that it is not best practice to remove children's clothing while in the classroom and before meals. Children will only have clothing removed in the sleep room when going to sleep.

Supporting relationships around children:

3. Family wall pictures are now moved lower down on the wall where children can see/reach. Families have been contacted and asked to create 'Family Books' so that children can have constant access to family pictures throughout the day.
4. Encourage staff to sit with children at the table where possible, have one staff member cleaning up and the other's sitting with the children.

- Staff have been given printed information on their Child-Lead curriculum to revisit.

Physical and material environment:

- Kitchen play toys are stored in and on the play kitchen and in open baskets beside it.

Preventive Action

Basic needs:

- Water station set up has been added to staff's daily checklist and added to new Room Standards policy.
- Added to new Room Standards policy. Created posters for rooms RE 'Comfort & Dignity'

Supporting relationships around children:

- Added 'family wall/pictures accessible and low down' to daily checklist for staff and new Room Standards Policy.
- Create a room roster for the staff so they know who should clean and who should sit at the tables.
- Ensure regular, on-going training regarding Child-Led curriculum and the importance of the children having their voices heard. Print outs for room as reminders.

Physical and material environment:

- Clearly labelled kitchen toy baskets and areas for storing said toys.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence of the following was provided:

Children's water bottles at a level accessible to them.

Repositioned family walls.

Play kitchen in the Wobbler room 1 with play resources available to the children.

Summary Comment

The evidence submitted by the registered provider in relation to regulation 19 - Health, welfare and development of child has been reviewed by the inspectors and accepted.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 22 – Food and drink

A registered provider shall ensure that adequate and suitable, nutritious and varied food and drink is available for each pre-school child attending the pre-school service.

Compliance Information

The service provides all breakfast, snacks and meals to children in attendance on a full day care basis. A copy of a 1-week menu was available and on display, which detailed all food options prepared and cooked onsite by the cook. The snacks and meals listed on the menu, while taking into consideration the age of children and the times they are present for were suitable, nutritious and a varied choice was available.

Meals are adjusted to suit younger children and babies' needs where required.

Breakfast is provided in the morning. A hot meal of spaghetti bolognese was served at 11am to the children attending the rooms accommodating the younger children and the children attending the rooms on the first floor had their dinner at 12:30pm, and an afternoon snack of buttered brown bread with yogurts was served at 3pm. A fruit snack was served at 4pm. The cook confirmed that extra portions or other options of food is also available where needed. Snacks and meals are prepared in line with children's dietary requirements.

In the ECCE Year 1 room and ECCE Year 2 room children's drinks were provided in the care room, and available to the children throughout their day.

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 entrance doors leading into the premises were appropriately secured to prevent the children from exiting unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the premises.
- The kitchen was inaccessible to the children during the inspection.
- Cleaning agents were stored safely out of the reach of children.

Infection Control:

- Thermostatically controlled running water, liquid soap, paper towels and foot operated bins were provided for hand washing purposes.
- Individually labelled containers were provided for the storage of children's soothers.
- The premises' play equipment and materials were in a clean and hygienic condition. Documented up-to date cleaning schedules were available.

Administration of Medication:

- Medications were stored out of the reach of children. No children were observed having medication administered on the day of inspection.

Safe Sleep:

- The inspectors observed that 10-minute sleep check observations noting each child's colour, position and breathing pattern were being performed and documented on sleeping children attending the Wobbler room 1 and the Wobbler room 2.
- Adequate space of at least 50cm was left between the cots in the sleep room adjacent to the Toddler room.

Fire Safety:

- The records reviewed demonstrated that fire drills were practiced on a regular basis to familiarise both adults and children of the correct procedures to follow in the event of a fire.

Outing:

- The service manager stated that the service did not conduct outings.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. A small portable trampoline was provided in the outdoor area adjacent to the Wobbler room 2. Trampolines are considered to be inappropriate equipment in an early years setting as they are not recommended for children aged less than 6 years due to safety risks.
2. The chairs provided in the Toddler room were not age appropriate for all of the children present. The Wobbler room 2 children moved to the Toddler room after dinner time. A child from the Wobbler room 2 group was observed falling off the chair due to its unsuitability.

Infection Control:

3. In both the Wobbler room 1 and the Toddler room the children's afternoon snack of buttered brown bread was placed directly on to the table; no plates were used. This presents a risk of cross contamination.
4. Handwashing was observed not to occur at the following times:
 - The children in the Wobbler room 1, Wobbler room 2 and the Toddler room did not have their hands washed before they had their afternoon tea.
 - In the Wobbler room 1 staff and children were not always observed to wash their hands after nappy changing.
 - Staff members were observed not to wash their hands after cleaning children's noses.

Administration of Medication:

5. Two children for whom medication was available to be administered in the service in the event of an emergency, to include an inhaler, did not have a completed medical care plan with parents' signature to accompany this in advance of potential administration.

Safe Sleep:

6. In the Toddler room a staff member was observed to conduct a sleep check on 5 children while standing at the sleep room door. The children were not individually checked. All children must be individually checked while sleeping to include the children's colour, breathing and position.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective Action

General Safety:

1. Trampoline has been removed and is no longer available for children to use.
2. Smaller chairs are now available in Toddler room for when smaller children are present.

Infection Control:

3. Snack is now brought into the room on plates rather than on trays.
4. Registered provider purchased more cloths so that children can have hands cleaned this way rather than transitioning out of the room to the bathroom area to clean hands as this can cause upset, particularly at mealtimes. All staff have been given nappy-changing policy to revise and sign off on and reminded of the importance of hand-washing. Hand sanitiser clearly labelled in room for staff use after cleaning noses.

Administration of Medication:

- In relation to the medicine's discussed – one was a temporary inhaler which was only used for a short period of time and was mistakenly not sent home as the parent advised they did not need it. The inhaler has now been sent home with the parent for disposal. The second medication was an antihistamine which was sent in along with Calpol should the child need it. Said medication has since been sent home with the child and parents have been advised that any such medication will require a doctor's note and medicine form.

Safe Sleep:

- Staff have been advised that it is not sufficient to simply investigate the room during sleep checks. Policy has been provided for review.

Preventive Action

General Safety:

- Trampoline has been removed from premises and information on trampoline use included in policy.
- Clearly label smaller chairs for Wobblers so they do not sit on bigger chairs.

Infection Control:

- As above.
- Posters up in rooms to remind them of the importance of hand-washing before meals, before and after nappy changes and after cleaning noses.

Administration of Medication:

- Staff have been provided with medicine administration policy to review and sign off on. All medicine entering the building must now go through the manager to ensure appropriate documentation. This is now added to policy.

Safe Sleep:

- At next staff meeting they will fully revise the actions to be taken during sleep checks. Posters displayed in all rooms with full instructions.

Supporting documentation submitted

Evidence of the following was provided:

Medical care plan.

Signage for hand washing and reminders for staff re process of completing sleep checks.

Copy of medication policy.

Summary Comment

The evidence submitted by the registered provider in relation to regulation 23 - Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child has been reviewed by the inspectors and accepted.

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

(2)(a) and (b) The first aid boxes were suitably equipped and safely stored in readily accessible positions on the premises, out of the reach of children.

Non-Compliance Information

(1) A person trained in first aid including first aid responder (FAR) training was not immediately available to the children attending the pre-school service as evidenced in the staff roster and the in-date FAR certifications provided for inspection. One staff member had in date FAR certification only and was not present in the service for the entire operational hours. Eight staff members have in date paediatric first aid training.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective Action

(1) Registered provider is renewing current FAR trained staff's certificate and have 3 more staff signed up to complete FAR training by the 13th of April 2026.

Preventive Action

(1) Registered provider will ensure to always have minimum 2 staff members FAR trained at all times and will be more mindful of expiry dates.

Supporting documentation submitted

Confirmation of FAR training for 3 staff members.

Summary Comment

The evidence submitted by the registered provider in relation to regulation 25 - First aid has been reviewed by the inspectors and accepted.

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 was maintained of fire drills which had been completed in the service. Based on the records maintained and as reported by staff members, fire drills were carried out monthly. The last recorded fire drill took place on 10/02/26.
- (b) A record was kept of the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises. Fire extinguishers were certified as having been serviced on 11/12/25 and the smoke detection system on 27/11/25.
- (4) Notices of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire were conspicuously displayed in the premises.