

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2017FL500
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Name of Service:	Little Harvard Creche and Montessori
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Address of Service:	Holywell, Swords, Fingal, Co. Dublin
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Eircode:	K67 V076
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Name of Registered Provider:	James Hargrave
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Service type:	Full day care, part-time and sessional
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Dates of Inspection:	03/10/2023
	04/10/2023

No of pre-school children:	AM	83	PM	62
		75		59

Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, 181-189 Lakeshore Drive, Airside Business Park, Swords, Co. Dublin K67 Y5C6.
Inspection undertaken by:	S Taaffe and AM Coyle
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

Little Harvard operates seventeen childcare services in Dublin city and county, in Co Wicklow and in Co Kildare with this service providing sessional, part-time and full day care for pre-school children from 1 to 6 years of age and school aged children up to 12 years of age. The service operates from Monday to Friday between 7.00am and 6.30pm for 51 weeks each year, closing for 1 week over the Christmas holiday period. Eligible children are facilitated to participate in the state funded early childhood care and education (ECCE) scheme from 9.15am – 12.15pm from Monday to Friday for 38 weeks each year. There are 9 care rooms provided on the premises with pre-school children currently accommodated in 7 care room, namely the Wobbler Room, Toddler Room 1, Toddler Room 2, Pre-school Room 1 and Pre-school Room 2 located on the ground floor and ECCE Room 5 and Pre-school Room 6 located on the first floor. The service's sleep room is situated between and directly accessible from both the Wobbler Room and Toddler Room 1. A spacious fully enclosed outdoor play area is provided to the rear and side of the premises.

Staffing

There are 23 staff members employed in this service including a manager who co-ordinates the day to day operational management of the service whilst supporting the staff members and children when necessary, 18 staff members who work directly with the pre-school children, 1 staff member who works solely with the school aged children in the service, a chef, a bus driver and a staff member who engages in cleaning duties from 4.00 to 9.00pm daily. The registered provider was not present during the inspection and is not based in this 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. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 15 - record of pre-school child.

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 and staff members, a regional manager, a manager from one of the company's other services and the children who were present during the course of the inspection and the company's general manager who was present for the closing meeting at the end of the second day of 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.

(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 manager was the designated person in charge of the service and the assistant manager was appointed to deputise as required.

(b) The service manager was present and in charge of the service when the inspectors arrived unannounced at 9.15am on the first morning and arrived announced at 9.55am on the second day of the inspection.

All staff files for the 23 staff members employed in this service were reviewed, in addition to files maintained for the registered provider, a company director, a general manager, the company's child protection and compliance officer, two regional managers, a manager from one of the company's other services in the locality who was present for part of the inspection and a staff member who may be present in this service in a relief capacity. Consequently, a total of 31 staff files were reviewed.

(2)(a)(b) There were 2 written, validated references available for the 31 staff members.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures were available for all 31 staff members whose files were reviewed.

(d) International police vetting was available as required for 21 staff members who had resided outside of the Irish jurisdiction for more than 6 consecutive months as adults.

(4) The two regional managers, the manager from one of the company's other services whose file was reviewed, the relief staff member and all 19 staff members in this service who work directly with pre-school children held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 6 - 8 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) or a qualification deemed by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) 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 days 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 on the first day of inspection and remained so on both days of inspection.

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

- In the Wobbler Room there were 6 children aged 1 year 3 months to 1 year 9 months being cared for by 2 staff members.
- In the Toddler Room 1 there were 8 children aged 1 year 11 months to 2 years 4 months being cared for by 2 staff members.
- In the Toddler Room 2 there were 8 children aged 2 years 4 months to 2 years 6 months being cared for by 2 staff members.
- In Pre-school Room 1 there were 14 children aged 3 to 4 years, all attending on a full day care or part-time basis, being cared for by 2 staff members.
- In Pre-school Room 2 there were 13 children (of whom 5 children were aged 2 years 8 months and 2 years 9 months and the remaining 8 children were aged 3 years to 3 years 7 months), all attending on a part-time or full day care basis, being cared for by 2 staff members.
- In ECCE Room 5 there were 18 children aged 2 years 9 months to 4 years 6 months being cared for by 3 staff members.

- In Pre-school Room 6 there were 16 children aged 3 year 10 months to 5 years being cared for by 2 staff members.

The service managers and the regional manager provided relief for staff breaks and support in the care rooms during the inspection.

(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 at the service.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 15 – Record of pre-school child

(1) A registered provider of a pre-school service other than a pre-school service in a drop-in centre or a temporary pre-school service shall ensure that a record in writing is kept in respect of each pre-school child attending the service containing the following particulars:

- (a) the name and date of birth of the child;*
- (b) the date on which the child first attended the service;*
- (c) the date on which the child ceased to attend the service;*
- (d) the name and address of a parent or guardian of the child and a telephone number where that parent or guardian or a relative or friend of the child can be contacted during the hours of operation of the service;*
- (e) authorisation for the collection of the child;*
- (f) details of any illness, disability, allergy or special need of the child, together with all the information relevant to the provision of special care or attention;*
- (g) the name and telephone number of the child's registered medical practitioner;*
- (h) record of immunisations, if any, received by the child;*
- (i) written parental consent for appropriate medical treatment of the child in the event of an emergency.*

(3) A record in writing referred to in paragraph (1) or (2) shall be open to inspection on the premises by-
(c) an authorised person.

Compliance Information

(1) A sampling process was used in relation to the children's records. All 15 sampled registration forms were appropriately completed with the required information as specified in sub-sections (a) to (i) in this regulation.

(3)(c) The children's records were open to inspection as requested by the inspectors as authorised persons.

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 of how each child's learning, development and well-being was facilitated within the daily life of the service:

Basic needs:

- During the inspection the staff members were observed to be caring and kind in their interactions with the children and demonstrated sensitivity and responsiveness to each child's individual needs, likes and preferences. For example, one child in the Wobbler Room was new to the service, having commenced attending the service on the week preceding the inspection. The staff members were observed providing extra comforting and attention to this child using warm and gentle touch and tones in their efforts to engage and support the child, and following the child's lead as they explored the environment, all to very good effect.
- During snack times and mealtimes, the staff members interacted warmly with the children which created a relaxed atmosphere. Children who were able were encouraged to feed themselves and assistance was provided by staff members as required, with time allowed for the children to eat without rushing. The younger pre-school children were provided with bibs to protect their clothes when eating.
- The staff members in the Wobbler Room stated that the children in this care room were facilitated to sleep in cots when their needs dictated, in keeping with their home routine when appropriate. During the inspection these children did not show signs of tiredness or require sleep until after morning snack. Children in the other care rooms aged 2 years and older who still availed of a day-time nap were facilitated to sleep in Pre-school Room 2 at the service's designated sleep time after dinner.
- Nappy changing was carried out regularly and in a timely manner. Staff members were observed chatting and singing to the children during this time and using it as an opportunity for warm one to one interactions. The staff members were observed to be responsive to the children's cues, should they need to use the toilet, with discreet supervision and assistance provided to the children when required.
- All children engaged in outdoor play on the days of inspection.

Supporting relationships around children:

- In all care rooms the inspectors observed the staff members initiating conversations with the children and providing praise and encouragement to the children using gentle tones of voice. The staff members spoke positively and warmly to and about the children during the inspection.
- The staff members were observed displaying anticipation and appropriate responsiveness when children experienced challenges within the environment and when children chose to change or opt out of activities. Staff members were observed acting as play partners with the children in the children's chosen activities.
- Family photographs were on display in the care rooms which supported the children to develop a sense of belonging and connectedness in the service and bridge the gap with home.
- A welcoming atmosphere in the service was evidenced by the staff members greeting children and parents and guardians in a friendly manner on their arrival to the service. Parents and guardians were provided with the opportunity to exchange information about their children with the staff members at drop-off and collection. A written record of the pre-school children's meals, activities, general wellbeing and, if relevant, nappy changes and sleep was maintained on a daily basis which was provided to parents when the children were being collected from the service.

Physical and material environment:

- In each care room, play materials and equipment were accessible on low-level shelving to facilitate children's independent choice and play.
- The seven care rooms where pre-school children were accommodated were laid out in designated areas of interest including home corners with dress up costumes on rails, construction areas, arts and crafts areas, and rest areas equipped with soft matting and cushions for children to take a break from activities and rest if required. Age-appropriate play equipment to support the development of the children's fine motor skills were provided in the care rooms. These included jigsaws, wooden and plastic bricks, shape sorters, magnets, interlocking plastic toys, threading equipment and peg boards.
- The Wobbler Room contained equipment to provide opportunities for the youngest children in the service to engage in physical activity through self-initiated movement with padded floor mats, covered foam wedges and push-along toys provided to support gross motor development.

- The children’s individual curricular-themed artwork was on display in the care rooms, including autumn-themed pictures and craft work.
- Sensory play experiences were facilitated indoors with tray-top activity tables filled with a range of sensorial materials including dried pasta, lentils, cones and conkers provided in each care room and also sand tables provided in the two outdoor play areas.
- The outdoor play area which is located to the rear and side of the premises was surfaced with artificial grass and enclosed by the service walls, boundary walls and fencing. Wooden fencing divided the space into two separate areas, one of which was designated for use by the children attending the Wobbler Room, Toddler Room 1 and Toddler Room 2, while the other larger area was designated for use by the pre-school children and school age children attending the remaining care rooms. Play equipment was provided to suit the age and stage of development of the children using each separate area.
A low-level plastic climbing frame with slide attached, push-along toys, self-propel cars, rocking toys, a plastic rocking swing with adjoining slide, interlocking rubber bricks, tyres and a lidded sand table were amongst the equipment provided in the section used by the younger pre-school children.
A mobile domed plastic climbing frame, two lidded sand tables, a plastic kitchen, sit-in self-propel cars, wheelbarrows, footballs, cones and tyres were included in the play equipment provided to support outdoor play activities in the section used by the older pre-school children and the school age children. Two wooden climbing frames were provided in this area, one of which was designated for use by children aged 2 to 8 years and which had an attached slide and steps leading to a standing platform with a play area beneath. The other wooden climbing frame provided in this section was fitted with rope ladders, horizontal bars and ladders, and this was designated for and observed being used by children aged 5 years and older attending the service.
A lean-to covered structure was in place in a section of the larger outdoor play area which provided shelter from sun and rain, and which facilitated outdoor play in all weathers.
All children attending the service had two periods of outdoor play with their peers at assigned intervals during the day, as detailed on a garden roster on display in each care room and observed during the inspection.

Non-Compliance Information

Basic needs:

On the first day of inspection one child attending the Toddler room 1 who was not tired and did not sleep at the prescribed sleep time, was encouraged to stay quiet in the darkened room while the other children slept. The child was not provided with an alternative environment to facilitate relaxation, play or activity when not sleeping, in order to support their well-being. Additionally, some children may have struggled to settle to sleep or to remain asleep due to being distracted by the child who was awake.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The registered provider stated the following corrective actions and preventive actions have been undertaken: Children who do not wish to sleep are now being facilitated to play in another classroom or the garden area during sleep time. Local and senior management will continue to carry out unannounced inspections to ensure compliance with all aspect of Regulation 19.

Summary Comment

The corrective action and preventive action submitted by the registered provider have addressed the non-compliance identified on inspection in relation to Regulation 19(1)(a).

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 snacks and meals to the children attending on a full day care basis. The children who attend the ECCE programme bring their own snack with them from home. All other snacks and meals are prepared on site by the chef. A 3-week menu demonstrating that a varied and nutritional choice of food is available was on display in the service. A selection of breakfast cereals and toast with butter was available for the children to have for breakfast between 8.00 and 9.00am. The morning snack served by the service from 11.00am on the first morning of inspection consisted of mashed banana with avocado and cocoa, with an alternative snack of yogurt in addition to cream crackers offered to children who declined the menu snack. On the second day of inspection toasted pitta bread with cheese and a selection of fruit was served for morning snack. A hot meal of pasta with Bolognese sauce was provided for dinner on the first day of inspection with fish stew and mashed potato served on the second day. Homemade hummus with bread sticks and fruit was served for tea at 4.00pm on the first day of inspection with homemade pizza served for tea on the second day of inspection. A choice of milk or water was available to drink with meals. The children's water bottles were available for the children to take from low-level shelves, should they feel thirsty at any stage during the 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 and garden gates were secured to prevent the children from exiting unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the service. Magnetic door release buttons were required to be activated to facilitate adults and accompanying children to exit the corridors leading into the front hallway and also to exit the premises through the front door.
- The designated emergency exit doors were clear and unobstructed.

- The water temperature in the hot taps did not exceed the recommended maximum water temperature of 43°C. This reduced the risk of scalding for the children in attendance.
- Play materials and equipment were observed to be safe and suitable for the developmental age of the children present in the care rooms and in the outdoor play areas. The larger of two wooden climbing frames in the outdoor play area was designated to be used by children aged 5 years and older, in keeping with the manufacturer's instructions to reduce the risk of falls.
- Cleaning agents were stored safely out of the reach of children.

Infection Control:

- The service implemented effective soother management procedures, with all individually labelled soothers stored in personalised containers when not in use. In discussion with the inspectors, staff members described appropriate management of mouthed toys and soothers including the requirement to wash these items in in soapy water after use and the daily preparation and use of the sterilising solution provided in the service.
- The children's water bottles were labelled with each individual child's name which reduced the risk of cross-infection for the children in attendance.
- Thermostatically controlled running warm water, liquid soap and single use paper towels were available at all wash hand basins to support effective hand hygiene procedures in the service.
- The children were facilitated to wash their hands before eating and following outdoor and messy play. Children who were toilet trained were gently reminded, and assisted when necessary, to wash their hands after using the toilet.
- Staff members wore individual aprons and gloves for nappy changing procedures and washed their own hands before changing gloves between each nappy change. Children's hands were washed after they had their nappies changed.
- The premises and play equipment were in a clean and hygienic condition. Up to date cleaning schedules were on display in the service.
- Tables were observed to be appropriately cleaned prior to and following meals and snacks.
- The sand tables provided in the outdoor play area had appropriate lids available and were covered when not in use, to prevent contamination by animals and birds.

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 all sleeping children.
- Based on an examination of the children's attendance records maintained in the service, all children under 2 years of age have access to a standard cot on a daily basis. On the day of inspection all children aged less than 2 years slept in one of the 11 standard cots provided in the service's sleep room.
- The temperature in the sleep room was monitored and recorded on a regular basis throughout the day and was maintained between 18 - 20°C.
- Adequate space of at least 50cm was maintained between the cots in the sleep room and the stackable beds set up in Pre-school Room 2 after lunch.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

A child in Pre-school Room 1 was provided with whole grapes from home for their morning snack. These were observed in the child's open lunch box on the table in front of the child whilst the child was eating from the lunch box at snack time. Staff members did not cut the grapes into smaller pieces to reduce the risk of choking for the child until requested to do so by the inspector.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The registered provider stated the following corrective actions and preventive actions have been undertaken: All staff were spoken to regarding the importance of cutting grapes lengthwise. Notices have also been displayed around the premises. Local management and staff will ensure that grapes which supplied from home are always cut lengthwise. Management sent a notice to all parents to inform them and also spoke to all staff regarding the importance of cutting grapes lengthwise.

Supporting documentation submitted

- Copy of the notice sent to parents highlighting the importance of cutting grapes, cherry tomatoes and berries lengthwise to reduce the risk of choking.

Summary Comment

The corrective action and preventive action submitted by the registered provider have addressed the non-compliance identified on inspection in relation to Regulation 23.

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) A sufficient number of staff members held in-date First Aid Response (FAR) training to ensure that a person with FAR training was at all times immediately available to the children attending the service. This was evidenced in staff members' training records and the service's staff roster.

(2)(a) The first aid boxes were suitably equipped and safely stored in readily accessible and conspicuous positions on the premises. In addition, a stock of first aid supplies including adhesive plasters and individually wrapped disinfectant wipes for minor injuries were stored in each care room.

(b) The first aid supplies were available at all times for the children attending the pre-school 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.*
- (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 02/10/2023.
- (b) A record was kept of the number, type and maintenance of the fire fighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises. Fire extinguishers were certified as having been serviced on 30/08/2023 and the smoke detection system on 11/09/2023.
- (4) Notices of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire were conspicuously displayed in the premises.