

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report School Age Services

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2022DL012SA
Name of School Age Service:	Aurora's Hobbits Ltd.
Name of Registered Provider(s):	Aurora McCormick
Address of School Age Service:	Dromore National School Lifford Co. Donegal
Eircode:	F93 A275

Date(s) of Inspection:	20 January 2025			
Number of school age children present during inspection:	AM	NA	PM	10
Registration status:	Registered			
Conditions (if applicable):	Not applicable			

Address of the Early Years Inspectorate	Donegal Early Years Inspectorate, St. Conal's Campus, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal. F95 XK94
Inspection undertaken by:	K Folan M McDonnell
Title:	Early years inspectors

Authority to Inspect
Tusla's 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).

Description of Service:

Aurora's Hobbits Ltd is an afterschool service based in Dromore National School in Lifford, Co. Donegal. The service provides care to children aged 4 to 12 years of age from 1:30-6:30p.m. during the school year. The service operates from a room within the primary school building. There is an outdoor area available in the vicinity of the service. A small kitchen area and sanitary facilities are available onsite.

Staffing:

Four adults are employed in the service to work directly with the children. The registered provider was available on the day to facilitate the inspection.

Additional Information:

This inspection was carried out as a result of information received by the inspectorate.

Legislation

Tusla's Early Years Inspectorate is the independent statutory regulator of School Age Services in Ireland, and its role is to promote and monitor the safety and quality of school age care provision in accordance with the following legislation:

- The Child and Family Agency Act 2013, Part 12.
- Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) (Registration of School Age Services) (Amendment) Regulations 2022.
- The Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Registration of School Age Services Regulations 2018 (S.I. 575 of 2018).

A school age service means any early years service, play group, day nursery, crèche, day-care or other similar service which:

- a) caters for children under the age of 15 years enrolled in a school providing primary or post-primary education,
- b) provides a range of activities that are developmental, educational and recreational in manner, which take place outside of school hours, the primary purpose of which is to care for children where their parents are unavailable, and

- c) the basis for access to which is made publicly known to the parents and guardians of the children referred to in point (a) above.

It is the responsibility of a registered provider to ensure the safety and well-being of school age children and the above legislation authorises Tusla to assess compliance with the Regulations.

Inspection Methodology:

The inspection is unannounced to assess compliance with the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Registration of School Age Services Regulations 2018 (S.I. 575 of 2018), Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) (Registration of School Age Services) (Amendment) Regulations 2022, and the Child Care Act 1991, Section 58 as amended by Part 12 of the Child and Family Agency Act, 2013.

The findings on inspection are gathered through a triangulation method, including:

- Information obtained through examination of documentation.
- Direct observation.
- Discussion with relevant staff.

This inspection aims to determine the extent to which service is appropriate for the care, safety, and wellbeing of children in accordance with the regulations cited above.

Inspection findings are documented in the School Age Services 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 corrected the non-compliance and how they will prevent them 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 CAPA 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.

Acknowledgements:

The inspectors wish to acknowledge the co-operation of the children, registered provider and staff who were present on the day of inspection.

Summary of Findings:

On the day of inspection, the registered provider was found to be compliant in:

Regulation 8 (1)(a)(b)(c): Vetting Disclosures

Regulation 9 (1)(2)(4): Staffing levels

Regulation 10: Policies of a school age service

Regulation 12: Insurance

Regulation 13: Complaints

Child Care Act 1991, Section 58(G) as amended by Part 12 of the Child and Family Agency Act, 2013

Regulation 8: Vetting disclosures

(1) A registered provider of a school age service other than a childminding service 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,*

Regulatory Requirement Met

- (1) Five files were reviewed including the registered provider's.
- (a) Six of the ten references were available from a past employer and were validated.
- (b) Four of the ten references were available from a reputable source and were validated.
- (c) Five adults including the registered provider had Garda Vetting disclosures available for review.

The service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

Regulation 9: Staffing levels

- (1) Subject to this Regulation, a registered provider of a school age service other than a childminding service shall ensure that there is at all times an adequate number of competent and suitable adults on the premises while the service is operating.*
- (2) Without prejudice to paragraph (1), a registered provider of a school age service other than a childminding service shall ensure that there is a minimum ratio of 1 adult to 12 children at all times while the service is operating.*
- (4) A registered provider of a school age service shall ensure that the school age children attending the service are appropriately supervised at all times.*

Regulatory Requirement Met

- (1) On the day of inspection, the registered provider ensured there was an adequate number of adults working directly with the children.
- (2) There were two adults working directly with ten children.
- (4) The adults were observed to support children with their homework. The children were given the opportunity to choose the activities such as art, building bricks and dress up. The adults provided assistance to children when required.

Regulation 10: Policies of a school age service

A registered provider of a school age service shall ensure that the policies and statements specified in Schedule 6 are in place for the service.

Regulatory Requirement Met

The following policies were assessed and contained information to support the staff in their care practices:

- Complaints policy,
- Policy on the dropping off and collection of children.

The inspectors reviewed the above policies, and they contained the information required as per Schedule 6 of the regulations to support staff in their practice.

Regulation 12: Insurance

A registered provider shall ensure that the school age service is adequately insured.

Regulatory Requirement Met

The service was insured to provide care for 36 children attending the service. The insurance was valid from 28 March 2024 to 27 March 2025.

Regulation 13: Complaints

- (1) A registered provider of a school age service other than a childminding service 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 of a school age service other than a childminding service shall ensure that—*
- (a) a record in writing is kept of a complaint made to the provider in respect of the school age 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.*

Regulatory Requirement Met

(1)(a)(b)(c)

The complaints policy was available for review by the inspectors. The policy detailed the procedure of how to make a complaint and how the complaint would be dealt with. It outlined that the complainant would be kept informed of the complaint's procedure. There was also a child friendly complaints policy outlining how the children could make a complaint if required.(2)(3) The registered provider advised the inspectors that no complaints had been received by the service.

Child Care Act 1991, Section 58(G) as amended by Part 12 of the Child and Family Agency Act, 2013

It shall be the duty of every person providing an early years service to take all reasonable measures to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of children attending the service and to comply with regulations made by the Minister under this Part.

Regulatory Requirement Met

During the inspection the inspectors observed the health, safety and welfare of children being supported by the following:

- The adults were observed speaking to the children in a kind and respectful way. The adults and children engaged in conversation about the children's day and the adults listened attentively to each child.
- The adults were observed listening to the children at snack time. Toasted sandwiches and fruit were served to the children. Water and milk were also available.
- The children appeared happy in the service and were observed playing with plastic bricks, art activities and playing outside.
- The service had motor insurance in place to provide for the collection of school age children from other schools to the service.
- The service had a policy for school collections and there was evidence available that the policy was in place such as signed parental consent forms and full drivers' licence for staff transporting children.