

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2023KE002
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Name of Service:	Little Harvard Childcare Ltd
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Address of Service:	The Park, Ledwill Park, Kilcock, Naas, Co. Kildare
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Eircode:	W23 X2IV
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Name of Registered Provider:	James Hargrave
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date(s) of Inspection:	18/06/2025
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Date 2 of Inspection:	19/06/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	98	PM	70
Day 2	AM	94	PM	62

Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Child & Family Agency, Suite 7, Vista Primary Care, Ballymore Eustace Road, Naas, Co. Kildare, W91 X38W.
Inspection undertaken by:	E. Mulhern and S. Quigly
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	N/A
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Description of service

Little Harvard, Ledwill Park, Kilcock opened in 2023. It is 1 of 21 private early years services operated by the registered provider. It is registered to accommodate a maximum of 132 children aged between one and six years. The service operates from 07:00 to 18:30, Monday to Friday and offers full day, part-time and sessional education and care. The service is located in a purpose-built two-story building in a housing development on the outskirts of Kilcock, Co. Kildare. The premises include nine care rooms with sanitary facilities, a cot room and two outdoor areas.

Staffing

There are 19 staff employed to work in the service including the person in charge, a chef and a cleaner. Sixteen staff are employed to work directly with the children. Fifteen staff were working directly with children on the first day of the inspection. Two staff members from the company's other services were brought in to work directly with the children on the second day of the inspection bringing the number to seventeen. The person in charge was available to cover for breaks, as were three of the company's regional managers who were on site for both days of inspection. The company's general manager was present during the inspection but did not work directly with the children.

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 areas of governance, health, welfare and development of child and safety. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under the following regulations. A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 9(7)(a).

Regulation 9(1)(a) & (b), (2), (4) & 7(a) – Management and recruitment

Regulation 10 - Policies, procedures etc. of pre-school service

Regulation 11 (1) & (2) – Staffing

Regulation 19 (3) - Health, welfare and development of child

Regulation 23 - Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child (General Safety)

Regulation 25 (1) & (2) - First aid

Regulation 27 – Supervision

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

The inspection was carried out due to information received by the inspectorate.

Acknowledgments

The inspectors wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the management team, person in charge, staff and children who were present on the days 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.*

(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.

(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) The service had a person in charge and a named person to deputise.
- (b) The person in charge and a named deputy were always on the premises during the inspection. The staff roster provided for the person in charge or a person who could deputise to be present at all times of opening.
- (2) The inspection focused on records for five staff members. Two of the staff had been employed since the previous inspection, two staff transferred from the company's other services on the second day of the inspection and one staff member was a company manager.
- (a) Two past employer references were available for all five adults with a record of verification checks carried out.
- (b) Not applicable as all five adults had at least two previous employers.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures were available for all five adults. Garda vetting disclosures had been renewed for three adults whom it was required in accordance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, which requires services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
- (d) International police vetting was required for three adults and was available.
- (4) All five adults held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at a minimum Level 5 on the National Qualifications Framework or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.
- (7)(a) A sample of induction and supervision records were reviewed. These had been signed by the staff member and a manager and included a checklist with training and topics covered which included the service's policies and procedures.

Non-Compliance Information

- (7)(a) Through observations, review of documents and discussions with staff it was evident that staff required further supervision and training to implement the following service policies and procedures:
1. Behaviour management. See non-compliance information under regulation 19(3).
 2. Risk management. See non-compliance information under regulation 23.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

Detailed training has been carried out by the local and regional manager with all staff in relation to our behavior management policy. The Child Protection and Compliance Officer has met with all staff individually and outlined in detail the consequences that may occur if our behavior management policy has not been complied with in full.

The consequences outlined included the following:

- Immediate suspension from duty
- Investigation commenced
- Breaches reported to Tusla and Gardaí if appropriate
- Disciplinary action taken
- If noncompliance is proven, dismissal from employment with Little Harvard

A copy of the policy was supplied to each member of staff who were asked to refresh themselves with it and to discuss any queries they may have with local management. Manual handling training paying particular attention to the correct manner in which children should be lifted was carried out with all staff on 21 July. Local and senior management will ensure that staff are continuously reminded of our behaviour management policy and the consequences of non-compliance. The behaviour management policy will regularly be discussed at staff meetings. Our Human Resource (HR) department will liaise with local management to ensure that training is taking place regularly and in a timely fashion. Better Start (National Early Years Quality Development) will continue to work alongside our staff. They will be asked to pay particular attention to the area of the supervision of children.

Supporting documentation submitted

- Record of staff attendance at training titled 'Little Harvard Childcare Manual Handling and Correct Lifting of Children' dated 21 July 2025.
- Record titled 'Distribution of Little Harvard Policies and Procedures – Supervision of Childcare, Accidents and Incidents and Behaviour Management'. Signed by staff members.
- Statement from Area Manager confirming all staff received a copy of the above policies including training.

- Sample of individual staff training records in relation to the above signed by the area manager and staff member.

Summary Comment

The actions submitted should address the non-compliance. The effectiveness of the actions will be assessed on the next inspection.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 10 - Policies, procedures etc. of pre-school service

A registered provider of a pre-school service shall ensure that the written policies, procedures and statements specified in Schedule 5 are in place for the service.

Compliance Information

The inspection focused on the following policies specified in Schedule 5.

- (e) policy on managing behaviour
- (j) policy on accidents and incidents
- (m) policy on outdoor play
- (r) risk management policy

The service had written policies in place to guide practice in accordance with the requirements. The policies were dated effective from October 2024.

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.

Compliance Information

(1) An adequate number of adults were working directly with the children in the Wobbler 1, Toddler 1, Toddler 2, Toddler 3, ECCE, Preschool 1, Preschool 2 and Preschool 3 room during the inspection. See regulation 11(2) for further information.

(2) The minimum ratio of adults to children was maintained during the inspection in the Wobbler 1, Toddler 1, Toddler 2, Toddler 3, ECCE, Preschool 1, Preschool 2 and Preschool 3 rooms. Two additional staff from the company's other services were brought in to work directly with the children on Day 2 of the inspection. Three area managers and the person in charge covered the staffs breaks on both days of the inspection.

Non-Compliance Information

(1) An adequate number of adults were not working directly with the children allocated to the Wobbler 2 room on Day 1 of the inspection. See regulations 11(2) and 27 for further information.

(2) The minimum ratio of adults to children was not maintained at 09:55 when the inspectors were conducting an initial overview of adults and children on Day 1 of the inspection. The inspectors observed one adult caring for nine children from the Wobbler 2 room in the outdoor area. Three children were aged 1-2 years, and six children were aged 2-3 years. The children were attending on a full day care basis. The minimum ratio requirement is one adult to five children aged 1-2 years and one adult to six children aged 2-3 years. A minimum of two adults were required. See regulation 27 for further information.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

Six new staff have commenced work with Little Harvard since the date of the inspection. A further four have been offered contracts with Little Harvard and are due to commence employment before 1 September 2025.

An additional member of staff with approximately 20 years' experience working in the childcare sector, has been appointed to support management in the facility. Local management has delegated certain responsibilities to this member of staff, including the close supervision of staff regarding the implementation of our behaviour management policy and the maintenance of the correct adult to child ratio. Senior management will carry out frequent visits to the facility to ensure compliance with all aspects of regulation 11. Staff from our HR department will support local management in the recruitment of additional or replacement staff when required.

Supporting documentation submitted

No supporting documents submitted.

Summary Comment

The actions submitted should address the non-compliance. The effectiveness of the actions will be assessed on the next inspection.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 19 - Health, welfare and development of child

(3) A registered provider shall ensure that no practices that are disrespectful, degrading, exploitive, intimidating, emotionally or physically harmful or neglectful are carried out in respect of a pre-school child whilst attending the service.

Non-Compliance Information

It is acknowledged that most of the interactions observed by the inspectors were positive, gentle and kind in nature. However, the inspectors observed practices in place that were not in keeping with the requirements of the regulation or the service's behaviour management policy. These are outlined below.

1. At 10:00 on Day 1 of the inspection, when in the outdoor area, the inspector heard a raised adult voice coming from an open window on the first floor. The adult stated repeatedly in a sharp tone "Why you cry?" "Stop to cry", "If you want to cry over there, you cry over there". The inspector asked the person in charge who was also in the outdoor area, which room the voice came from. The person in charge reported it was the Toddler 3 room. The inspector went to the room and asked the adult working in the room if someone was upset. The adult said a child was upset as they only attend three days and this was their first of the three days. Raising a voice and withholding comfort when a child is crying can increase the child's stress, hinder emotional regulation and damage the trust essential for healthy development.
2. The inspectors observed that some negative behaviour management practices were in place contrary to the service's written positive behaviour management procedures. Through review of records and discussions with staff it was evident that there had been a practice of telling children that they would be sent to another room as a way of controlling their behaviour and this had been carried out on one occasion. It is acknowledged that this practice had been raised at the team meeting on 17 June 2025 and staff had been instructed not to send children

to other rooms as a form of punishment. However, this had not been effective in ensuring only positive behaviour management strategies are used as per the service policy. At 10:30 on Day 1 of the inspection the inspector observed an adult saying to a child repeatedly “If you don’t put on your bib, I’m not giving you snack”. Using negative behaviour management strategies can lead to increased anxiety and affect children’s emotional well-being.

3. The inspectors observed children being moved between rooms on numerous occasions which staff and the service manager reported was for the purpose of maintaining the minimum adult to child ratio requirements. Through observation, discussions with staff and review of documents it was evident that the practice was causing upset to children with the inspector observing two children crying because of the moves and asking to go back to their base room. It is acknowledged that the staff attempted to comfort the children. However, despite this one child displayed signs of upset including crying from 10:12 until falling asleep at 11:16 on Day 1 of the inspection. This practice could disrupt children’s sense of security and attachment, potentially affecting their emotional development and well-being.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

1. Please see actions under regulation 9 which also refers. Little Harvard has recently installed cameras in all our rooms, garden areas and common areas to assist with our security, compliance and enforcement of our policies and safeguarding issues.

2. Please see actions under regulation 9 which also refers. This matter was raised at the meeting held on 17 June 2025 because the manager had on one occasion identified that a child had been moved to another room because the child’s behavior at that time was challenging. The staff member who carried out this action has left our employment. Staff are aware that this practice is not permissible and positive behavior management strategies in compliance with our policy have formed part of their training. Staff have been reminded to be careful in the way instructions are given to children.

3. Please see actions under regulation 11 which also refers. The recruitment of additional staff will ensure that movement of children to maintain ratios is not necessary going forward. Regional and senior management will visit the facility on a regular basis to ensure compliance with all aspects of regulation 19.

Supporting documentation submitted

Please see information under regulation 9.

Summary Comment

The actions submitted should address the non-compliance. The effectiveness of the actions will be assessed on the next inspection.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 23 - Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child

A registered provider shall ensure that all reasonable measures are taken to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of a pre-school child attending the service and that the environment of the service is safe.

Compliance Information

General Safety:

Measures had been taken to safeguard the children. Entrances and exits were secured to prevent unauthorised entry or children leaving unsupervised. Emergency exits were kept clear and staff demonstrated an awareness of fire evacuation procedures. Children's attendance records were complete including the times they arrived at and left the service for reference in the event of a fire evacuation. Equipment available to children was suitable for their age and stage of development. Cleaning products were kept out of children's reach. Heavy furniture was secured to prevent tipping. The kitchen was secured to prevent children accessing the hazards within.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. At 12:04 on Day 1 of the inspection, in the outdoor area, the inspector observed an adult when playing a game, lifting a child who was on the ground to their feet, by one arm near the child's elbow. Lifting a child in this manner poses a risk of injury. Measures that had been put in place following previous incidents notified to Tusla had not prevented the continuation of this practice.
2. A cable was observed hanging from a stereo within reach of children in the Toddler 1 room on Day 1 of the inspection posing a risk of injury if accessed by a child. It is acknowledged this was subsequently removed by a staff member.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. The staff member acknowledges that they should have lifted the child correctly and will ensure to do so in the future. Manual handling training has been carried out with all staff to ensure that children are lifted correctly in the future. During visits, local and senior management will carry out spot checks to ensure that the correct manner for lifting children is followed.
2. The stereo was removed from the room. It has since been reintroduced with its cable pinned to the wall. Management, while visiting rooms, will ensure that all cables are pinned to the wall in such a manner as to prevent accidents from occurring.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

1. Please see regulation 9.
2. Photograph of stereo cable secured to wall.

Summary Comment

1. The actions submitted should address the non-compliance. The effectiveness of the actions will be assessed on the next inspection.
2. The actions have been deemed to adequately address the non-compliance.

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 person trained in first aid for children was available to the children throughout the inspection. The staff roster provided for a person trained in first aid to be available to the children at all times of opening.

(2) (a) & (b) Appropriately equipped first aid boxes were stored on the ground and first floor, in a conspicuous position easily available to the adults.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 27 – Supervision

A registered provider shall ensure that pre-school children attending the service are supervised at all times.

Compliance Information

Inspectors observed children being appropriately supervised by staff on both days of inspection as follows.

- Playing within the care rooms
- Using the sanitary facilities
- Eating meals
- During transitions
- When sleeping

Non-Compliance Information

It is acknowledged the children were appropriately supervised at the times outlined above. However, the children allocated to the Wobbler 2 room were not appropriately supervised when the inspectors undertook an initial overview of adults and children on Day 1 of the inspection. At 09:55 the inspectors observed one adult caring for nine children from the Wobbler 2 room in the outdoor area. Three children were aged 1-2 years and six children

were aged 2-3 years. The outdoor area was L shaped, and the children were playing in all areas of the space. The adult was providing close supervision to four children who were playing on the climbing equipment. Five of the other children were not visible to the adult from this position, posing a risk of injury or delayed intervention in the event of an accident or incident.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

Please see the response under reg 11. Staff have been instructed to ensure that they locate themselves in an area of the garden where they have clear view of all the children. Management will ensure compliance and regularly remind staff that they should locate themselves in an area of the garden where they have full view of all children playing.

Supporting documentation submitted

Please see information under regulation 9.

Summary Comment

The actions submitted should address the non-compliance. The effectiveness of the actions will be assessed on the next inspection.