

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2025FL001				
Name of Service:	Little Harvard Child Care Ltd				
Address of Service:	20 The Court, Balmoston, Donabate, Dublin 18, Co. Dublin				
Eircode:	K36 E3Y5				
Name of Registered Provider:	James Hargrave, Regina McGovern				
Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional				
Date of Inspection:	05/11/2025				
No of pre-school children:	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>AM</td> <td>42</td> <td>PM</td> <td>31</td> </tr> </table>	AM	42	PM	31
AM	42	PM	31		
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Child and Family Agency, Unit 4&5 Nexus Building, Block 6A, Blanchardstown Corporate Park, Dublin 15				
Inspection undertaken by:	E Hosford and Á Dunne				
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 Child Care Ltd is a private service located in an urban area on the north side of Dublin city one of 22 operated by the registered providers. The service provides full day, part time and sessional care to children aged from 1 to 6 years of age and operates from 7.00am to 6:30pm Monday to Friday. The service participates in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme and offers a service for school age children.

This service operates from two floors of a purpose-built premises and consists of nine care rooms, two outdoor areas, a separate cot room, a service kitchen for the preparation of meals, a staff office, and sanitary facilities. On the day of inspection there were seven care rooms in operation to include, Wobbler 1, 2 and 3, Toddler 1 and 2, ECCE room and the Preschool 1 room.

Staffing

The service employs a total of 25 staff to include the 2 registered providers, an operations manager, an area manager, designated person in charge, deputy designated person, a cook, cleaner and driver along with 15 childcare staff. The registered providers do not work within the service and the designated person in charge and the deputy person in charge are not assigned to a care room but are available to assist if required.

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 announced 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 and 19, however, on inspection additional non-compliance which posed a risk was identified under Regulation 23. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulation 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 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)(b) The service had a designated person in charge and named persons to deputise as required. The person in charge was present in the service when the inspectors arrived announced and remained in the service for the duration of the inspection. A review of the roster showed that a designated person in charge is rostered to always be on the premises.

(c) There was a clear management structure in place and staff were aware of their role and responsibilities.

(2) The files of 25 staff members employed in the service were reviewed. Garda vetting disclosures for all staff were also reviewed.

The registered provider had completed the following checks:

(a) Thirty-four validated written references were available from a past employer.

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

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for 25 staff members employed in the service. The service adhered to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years for all staff employed.

(d) Police vetting was available from 19 countries in respect of 18 staff members who had resided outside the jurisdiction for a period of more than 6 consecutive months as an adult.

(4) Twenty-one staff members who work directly with the early years children had documentary evidence of at least a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 or above on the National Framework of Qualifications or a qualification deemed eligible by the Department of Children, Disability and Equality (DCDE) .

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 11 - Staffing levels

(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

(2) During the inspection there were 14 adults working directly with 42 children aged between 1 to 6 years in the morning and 11 adults working with 31 children in the afternoon.

- Wobbler 1 room- 2 adults working with 6 children aged from 1-2 years of age in the morning and 4 children in the afternoon.
- Wobbler 2 room- 2 adults working with 6 children aged from 1-3 years of age in the morning and afternoon.
- Wobbler 3 room- 2 adults working with 5 children aged from 1-2 years of age in the morning and 1 adult working with 5 children in the afternoon.
- Toddler 1 room-2 adults working with 5 children aged from 2-3 years of age in the morning and 4 children in the afternoon.
- Toddler 2 room-2 adults working with 7 children aged from 1-3 years of age in the morning and in the afternoon.
- ECCE room/ Afterschool room- 2 adults working with 8 children aged from 3-5 years of age in the morning from 9am to 12pm.
- Preschool 1 room- 2 adults working with 5 children aged from 3-4 years of age in the morning and in the afternoon.

(8)(a) On review of the service roster and on discussion with staff two adults were on the premises during the operation of 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)

Basic Needs:

- Staff members were observed to be kind and attentive in their interactions with the children and the atmosphere in the service was warm and child centred.
- Healthy eating was promoted within the service with meals and snacks served at regular intervals with additional and alternative food at mealtimes made available to the children if required. Drinking water was freely available to the children throughout the session. A breakfast of cereal and milk was provided to the children, a morning snack of breadsticks and sliced fruits, a hot meal of pasta, chicken and peas and an afternoon tea of soup and bread.
- The staff members were observed sitting with the children at mealtimes encouraging conversations and extending interactions. The children were observed to move freely in the care rooms while exploring their environment. Staff were observed showing warmth and sensitivity in their interactions with the children while using soft and gentle tones.
- Transitions between activities were managed calmly and in an organised manner with staff giving the children clear and concise instructions. Older children were supported to use the toilet independently. Staff changed the younger children's nappies at scheduled times and in between when needed.

Physical and Material environment:

- The materials and equipment provided to the children in the care rooms was suitable to the age and stage of development of the children present. The rooms were laid out to support the children's independence where children had the freedom to choose from materials and equipment available to them. For example, low level baskets and clear boxes were accessible to the children to access supporting equipment for the home area, construction space and tabletop activities.

- Areas with mats, cushions and child size furniture were available for children to rest or take a break from activities if required.
- The care rooms were bright and inviting spaces with each child's completed artwork and activities on display.
- Two enclosed outdoor areas to the front of the service enabled the children to explore and develop their skills of climbing, running and jumping. Both areas had overhead canopies which provided shelter to enable staff and children to enjoy the areas in all weather conditions. The materials and equipment available to the children included climbing frames, bikes, building blocks, water and sand trays, see saw, slides, blackboard and chalk.

Supporting relationships:

- Staff in the care rooms engaged with parents daily through verbal conversation at drop off, collection and updated them on their child's meals, snacks, sleeping, nappy changes and activities undertaken.
- Staff encouraged the children to interact with each other in a calm and friendly manner while emphasising turn taking and sharing. Staff were observed working well together in supporting the children and transitioning from activities such as outdoor play and snack time.
- Staff were observed working well together in the provision of care to the children with additional support available to staff during transitions such as sleep time and preparing for outdoor play.

Non-Compliance Information

(1)(a)

Basic Needs

1. It was observed in the Wobbler 1 and 2 rooms that children were not encouraged or prompted to remove their soothers before and after sleeping and mealtime despite appearing settled in the care room. Overuse of soothers can limit a child's oral and speech development.
2. The position of the family tree displays in the Wobbler 1 and 2 rooms were not visually available to the children to support them to create a positive sense of belonging.

Physical and Material environment

3. Cause and effect toys in the Wobbler 3 room and outdoor area were not working, removing the play and developmental purpose of the toy from the children.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

In response to the non-compliances the service has stated the following.

1. A staff meeting was held on the 11.11.2025 and during this meeting staff have been reminded that children should be encouraged to remove their soothers before and after sleeping when they appear to be settled in the room. Local and Senior Management will do spot checks to ensure compliance with all aspects of regulation 19.
2. The family tree displays in Wobbler 1 and Wobbler 2 rooms were moved lower to the child's level to support their sense of belonging. Local and Senior Management will do spot checks to ensure compliance with all aspects of regulation 19.
3. Cause and effect toys from Wobbler 3 room and outdoor area that were not working due to batteries have been removed and placed in the storage to be used on the rotation basis to be sure that batteries are always in full operation. Management will monitor batteries usage. Local and Senior Management will do spot checks to ensure compliance with all aspects of regulation 19.

Supporting documentation submitted

1. Documentary evidence of staff meeting held don the 11 November 2025.
2. Photographic evidence and documentary evidence of staff meeting held don the 11 November 2025.
3. Documentary evidence of staff meeting held don the 11 November 2025.

Summary Comment

The actions submitted by the registered provider have been accepted. The corrective and preventive actions submitted by the registered provider will be reviewed 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.

Non-Compliance Information

Infection Control:

1. Handwashing practices were inadequate in the Wobbler 3 room to control the spread of infection. Staff did not follow the service infection control policy as children were not assisted to wash their hands before sitting at the table to eat their lunch.
2. Staff in the ECCE room did not ensure that children's perishable food items from home that were eaten at snack time were refrigerated on arrival to the service to prevent the potential risk of food borne infections. This is at variance with the service policy on infection control.

Safe Sleep:

3. Sleep practices observed in the service were not in line with the service policy on safe sleep and the sleep guidelines issued by Tusla, in September 2023, for example.
 - Five children from the Wobbler 2 room under the age of two years were facilitated to sleep on cocoon beds. Documentary evidence was not available to demonstrate that parents had been involved in the completion of individualised sleep plans before commencing this change of sleeping arrangement. This is at variance to Tusla's guidance document on safe sleep for children under 24 months.
 - Two children under the age of two years were observed to sleep on low stackable beds, which are not recommended as suitable beds for children under the age of two years old. Documentary evidence was not available to demonstrate that parents had been involved in the completion of individualised sleep plans before commencing this change of sleeping arrangement. This is at variance to Tusla's guidance document on safe sleep for children under 24 months.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

Infection Control:

1 and 2. In response to the non-compliances the service has stated that all staff have been retrained in our hand washing policy and visual reminders have been placed in the classroom to support staff. Local and Senior Management will conduct periodic inspections to ensure compliance with all aspects of regulation 23.

Safe Sleep:

3. To address the non-compliance all sleep plans documentation has been revised, and all the missing ones have been completed with parents' cooperation. Local and Senior Management will conduct periodic inspections to ensure compliance with all aspects of regulation 23.

Supporting documentation submitted

Infection Control:

1 and 2. Documentary evidence of staff meeting held don the 11 November 2025.

Safe Sleep:

3. Documentary evidence of completed sleep plans for children.

Summary Comment

The actions submitted by the registered provider have been accepted. The corrective and preventive actions submitted by the registered provider will be reviewed on the next inspection