

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CC180
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Name of Service:	Héronswood Childcare Centre
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Address of Service:	49 Silverhill, Heronswood, Carrigaline, Co. Cork
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Eircode:	P43 RT18
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Name of Registered Provider:	Mary Cleary
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Service type:	Full Day, Sessional
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Date(s) of Inspection:	27/07/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	66	PM	68
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Administration Building, St. Mary's Health Campus, Gurranabraher, Cork, T23 X440
Inspection undertaken by:	D Cotter & M Burke
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).

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Description of service

Heronswood Childcare Centre is a privately operated service that caters for children aged 0 to 6 years. It provides full day-care, part-time care and sessional care and the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme. Daily operating hours are from 8am to 6pm. The Service operates from a purpose built two storey building that is situated in a residential area. There are six care rooms namely the Baby room, the Fledgling room, the Junior Day Care room, the Blue room, the Green room and the Red room. There are two sleep rooms adjacent to the Baby and Fledgling rooms. There is a large outdoor area situated to the rear of the premises. The premises also has a kitchen, administration offices and associated sanitary accommodations.

Staffing

There were 41 adults attached to the service including the registered provider, who is not service based. On the day of inspection there were 26 adults on the premises of which 23 were working directly with the children. There were also two chefs and the person in charge.

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.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under Regulation 19 Health, welfare and development of child. As a result, the scope of the inspection included The Red, Blue and Fledgling rooms.

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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 person in charge, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

Statutory Notices

Notice	Date Served	Detail
Improvement Notice IN 3183	27/07/2026	Evidence of Garda vetting was not available for one staff member who had direct access to children.
Status	The registered provider submitted a written response with detailed corrective and preventive actions, which were accepted by the Inspectorate.	

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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 registered provider had ensured that a designated person in charge and a deputy person in charge were assigned to the service.

(b) Both the person in charge and deputy person in charge were on duty at the service when the inspectors arrived and were available throughout the inspection process.

(2)

Following a review of previous inspection information, information available on inspection and discussion with the person in charge, it was determined that 10 new staff had been employed since the previous inspection. All 10 staff work directly with the children. A total of 10 files were reviewed. In addition, it was also determined that 3

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staff's Garda vetting, who work directly with children were due for renewal and required review. The following information was noted:

(a) From the total 20 required written and validated references, 13 had been provided by past employers.

(b) A further 6 of the required 20 written and validated references were from a source other than a past employer.

(c)
Of the 10 new staff's Garda Vetting disclosures required, 9 were available for review. Of the three staff who required Garda Vetting, two were available. The service did not adhere to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years for one staff member. Please refer to the information outlined under Regulation 23 of this report.

(d) Documentary evidence was reviewed for the 10 new staff, and it indicated that none of the 10 staff lived outside of the jurisdiction for longer than six consecutive months, while over the age of 18 years.

(4)
Records demonstrated that 9 of the 10 staff had achieved at least a Major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at level 5 or above, as listed on the National Framework of Qualifications.

Non-Compliance Information

(2)
(a)(b) There was one staff member without a second reference from a past employer or from a source other than a past employer.
(c) See statutory notice section in relation to an Improvement Notice IN 3183 served.
(4)
One staff member working directly with children, did not have evidence of at least a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 on the National Framework of Qualifications or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent available on file.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(2)
(a) In her written response, the registered provider stated that the reference was file in the service. A template has been prepared by the registered provider to ensure that all vetting requirements will be met prior to a staff member being employed or having access to children.

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(4) In her written response the registered provider stated that a letter of recognition of the qualification as deemed by the Minister to be equivalent had been obtained and was now on file.

Supporting documentation submitted

(2)

(a) A copy of the reference was received by the inspectorate.

(4) A copy of the Letter of Qualification recognition was submitted.

A copy of the vetting template was also received.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The noncompliance identified under Regulation 9 (2) and (4) have been adequately addressed.

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)

The person in charge ensured that there were an adequate number of staff working directly with the children.

(2)

On the day of inspection, the ratio of staff to children was maintained as per the regulations.

The rooms were in operation as follows:

Morning:

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Room name	Type of Service	Age Range	Number of children present	Number of adults required	Number of adults present
Baby Room	Full Day Care	7-18 months	7	3	4
Fledgeling Room	Full Day Care	18-30 months	13	3	4
Junior Daycare	Full Day Care	2-3 years	8	2	3
Green Room	Full Day Care	2.5-4 years	14	2	3
Blue Room	Full Day Care	3-4 years	14	2	3
Red Room	Full Day Care	4-5 years	10	2	3

Afternoon:

Room name	Type of Service	Age Range	Number of children present	Number of adults required	Number of adults present
Baby Room	Full Day Care	7-18 months	7	3	3
Fledgeling Room	Full Day Care	18-30 months	13	3	4
Junior Daycare	Full Day Care	2-3 years	8	2	2
Green Room	Full Day Care	2.5-4 years	16	3	3
Blue Room	Full Day Care	3-4 years	14	2	3
Red Room	Full Day Care	4-5 years	10	2	2

(8)

The registered provider has ensured that there was a minimum of two staff at all times on the premises. This was evidenced through the staff roster and discussion with staff on the day.

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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

Basic Needs:

- During the inspection, children were served lunch, which was prepared by the chefs employed in the service. Lunch consisted of a lentil-based casserole, served with rice.
- Staff informed the inspectors that food was available outside of mealtimes. Alternatives were available on the day, for example, children who did not eat rice were offered pasta or potatoes.
- These mealtimes were noted to be relaxed and unhurried, with sufficient time allocated. Crockery was provided and staff promptly assisted children, as needed.
- Drinking water was accessible to the children both during and outside of the designated mealtimes.
- Older children, who attended the Blue room, were observed to access the toilet facilities independently. Staff supervised visits to the toilets and assisted as needed.
- In the Fledgling room, staff attended to the needs of children by changing their nappies in a prompt and respectful manner.
- Staff were observed to be kind and patient in their interactions with children. For example, stackable beds were brought into the Fledgling room for sleep time for the children over two years. Staff took time to help children settle and soothed them as they fell asleep. In the Red room, staff spoke to children with respect. Through observation, it was apparent that children felt supported to communicate their needs to attentive adults in this service.
- Staff in the Red room were observed to help children with the application of sunscreen. While doing this staff chatted freely and asked questions of each child while listening attentively to their responses.

Supporting relationships:

- Birthday displays and photographs of their families were displayed on the walls of the care rooms. In addition, children's birthdays were celebrated in a game, called 'The Birthday Walk' and a cake was baked by the service chefs. Such practices promoted a sense of identity and inclusivity among children.

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- Children enjoyed their meals and demonstrated confidence when they approached staff members seeking additional servings and asking questions.
- Children interacted positively with each other before and after mealtimes when singing nursery rhyme songs together.
- The staff members positively engaged in conversation with the children at mealtimes. For example, when one staff member assisted children with food, another staff member sat at each table to converse with them. This practice demonstrated the importance of a positive social environment around mealtimes.
- Transitions from mealtimes to group activities appeared seamless and children followed instructions easily, demonstrating they were familiar with daily routines.
- During discussion, the inspectors were advised that the service used a digital application to communicate with parents, which recorded daily details of their children's activities. Sharing of information was also facilitated through informal conversation at drop off and collection times, email, phone calls and the use of a messaging application.
- Staff members seamlessly assisted each other with duties in a calm collective way, demonstrating effective teamwork.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 20 – Facilities for rest and play

(1) Subject to this regulation, a registered provider shall ensure that-

- (a) having regard to the number of pre-school children attending the service, their respective ages and the amount of time they spend on the premises, there are adequate and suitable facilities for each child to play indoors and, where required by these Regulations, outdoors, during the day, and*
- (b) there are adequate and suitable facilities for a pre-school child to rest during the day,*

Compliance Information

- (1)
- (a)
- There were adequate and suitable facilities for each child to play indoors and outdoors.
 - The indoor environment of each room was laid out in defined interest areas.
 - The equipment in each care room was tailored to the age group attending. For instance, in the baby room, a ball pit and push along toys were available, while in the red room, an area had been set up to resemble an office to stimulate imaginative play.

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- The outdoor area was also laid out with a range of developmentally appropriate toys and materials to offer stimulating and challenging opportunities for play and learning.

(b)

- Each care room was equipped with a rest area should a child need to rest during their day.
- Stackable beds were available for the children over two years. In addition, there were two designated cot rooms, a baby sleep room with seven cots, and a wobbler sleep room with five cots located off of each respective room. There was also a floor bed available for a child under two who required a sleep.
- Staff were observed to physically check sleeping children every ten minutes and record these checks on a digital application.
- Sleep rooms were dimmed and not completely dark as is best practice. This allowed staff to complete sleep checks safely.
- Bed linens were clean upon inspection. It was reported to the inspector that bed linens are brought from home and returned to the family for laundering once a week, or more regularly as required.
- Matrasses observed appeared to be firm and correctly fitting.
- Temperatures in the sleep rooms were within the required range. These temperatures were recorded at 19.7°C.

Non-Compliance Information

- Not all mattresses were fitted with a waterproof cover. Of the 12 observed cots, only 2 had been fitted with such covers. This poses a risk of cross infection.
- Cots in the sleep room adjacent to the Baby room were not spaced the required 50cm apart. It was noted that the space between 2 of the cots was 23cm and the space between another 2 was 25cm. This poses a risk of cross infection.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

In her written response, the registered provider stated:

- Waterproof protective mattress cover had been purchased and fitted to all cots. Staff have been asked to ensure the protectors are fitted before children use the cots.
- One cot has been removed from the sleep room to allow more space between the cots.

Supporting documentation submitted

- A copy of the invoice for the mattress protectors was received by the inspectorate.
- Photographic evidence of the cot room was submitted.

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Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The noncompliance identified under Regulation 20 has been adequately addressed.

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 main entrance had been secured, and this ensured no unauthorised entry to, or exit from, the service.
- All play equipment appeared to be in a clean state and of good repair.
- The outdoor area had been securely fenced to prevent unauthorised entry to or from the area.
- The children's bags and coats were stored safely off the floor.
- Low level doors and windows were fitted with visibility strips.
- Windows in each care room had been made safe to prevent children from exiting or falling.
- Blind cords in each care room had been secured.
- Highchairs in the baby room were in a good condition and had been fitted with safety harnesses.
- Low level storage cupboards were secured with child proof locks.
- The stairway was well lit and fitted with suitable handrails.
- Bottle warmers were available for heating infant formula.

Infection Control:

- Pedal operated bins were in use throughout the service.
- Each bathroom and nappy changing area were fitted with liquid soap and paper towels.
- Nappy changing areas were supplied with disposable gloves and aprons.
- The nappy changing areas observed was equipped with clean and intact nappy changing mats with the surrounding area maintained in a clean condition.
- Barrier creams were individually labelled for each child who required them.
- Windows were open in the care rooms to aid natural ventilation.

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- Each hand wash basin was equipped with warm running water. Temperatures ranged between 31.1° and 40.8°C.
- Perishable foods were refrigerated.

Administration of Medication:

- Individually labelled fever reducing medicines were stored out of reach of the children and the bottles checked were in date. During discussion with staff members, they were aware of children's specific allergies and dietary requirements. In addition, a profile for each child who had allergies was on display on the press in the kitchenette of the Blue Room. The information consisted of child's name, their photo and the foods they were allergic to.
- Medication for one child was stored in a safe secure area box inaccessible to children, but in reach of staff members if needed. It consisted of an in-date adrenaline auto-injector and a box of antihistamine and clear instructions on guidelines for staff members.
- Staff stated that were aware of the procedure for the administration of medication.

Fire Safety:

- Wall tethered fire fighting equipment was available in each room.
- Fire doors observed were free from obstruction.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. Garda vetting was available for one staff member. However, this vetting disclosure was not dated within the previous three years in adherence to with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice 'EYI-RN12.3 Renewal of Garda Vetting'.
2. An electrical cable was observed to be hanging down and within reach of children in the Red room. This posed a risk of injury to a child.
3. Heavy equipment and furniture had not been anchored to prevent injury to a child in every room. It was observed in the red room that two heavy cupboards had not been anchored. This poses a risk of injury to a child.
4. Cleaning materials were observed to be stored within the of reach of children in the nappy change areas. The bottle of cleaning solution was placed directly alongside the changing mat in each of these areas. This posed a risk of a child coming into contact with harmful substances.

Infection Control:

5. Toilet brushes were stored in the children's toilet cubicles. While it is acknowledged that they had been placed at a height, they were still within the reach of older children. This posed a risk to children being exposed to harmful bacteria.
6. Children in the Fledgling room were not supported to wash their hands prior to their main meal. This posed a risk of infection control.
7. In the changing room adjacent to the Baby room, it was observed that toys were stored on the shelves under the changing mats. These toys included jigsaws, musical toys and electronic toys. This poses a risk of cross infection and infection control.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

In her written response, the registered provider stated:

1. An application has been made to renew the vetting for the staff member; a template has been devised to ensure all records are up to date.
2. Wire clips have been purchased and fitted to each room to ensure no cables are within reach of children.
3. Brackets to anchor the furniture had been purchased and would be fitted to all heavy furniture going forward.
4. Staff have been asked to store the cleaning fluids out of reach of children.

Infection Control:

5. Toilet brushes have been removed and will be stored in locked cupboards under the wash hand basins going forward.
6. Staff have been reminded at a staff meeting of the importance of hand hygiene.
7. The toys have been removed and in future will be placed in sealed storage containers to ensure there is no cross infection before they are reintroduced to the rotation of toys for the children.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

1. A copy of the submitted application and the template for staff vetting checks.
2. The invoice for the wire clips.
3. The invoice for the wall brackets.
4. The registered providers statement has been accepted.

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Infection Control:

5. The registered providers statement has been accepted.
6. The registered providers statement has been accepted.
7. The registered providers statement has been accepted.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The noncompliance's identified under Regulation 23 have been adequately addressed in relation to points 2-7. In relation to point 1, evidence of an application for the renewal of garda vetting was reviewed; however, a copy of the completed garda vetting has not been submitted for the one staff member to the inspector to date. The registered provider is required to furnish the required documentation to the Inspectorate upon receipt. This noncompliance in relation to Regulation 23 remains outstanding.

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) The registered provider had ensured that there was a person trained in First Aid Responder (FAR) training at all times available to the children. Through the inspection of staff records, it was noted that there were six staff with this qualification. It was evident through examination of the staff roster that at least one of these adults was available at all times throughout the day.

(2)

(a) (b) The registered provider had ensured there were adequately stocked first aid boxes available at all times should they be required. Each care room was provided with a small first aid box, while a larger first aid box was available in a conspicuous location on each storey of the premises.

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Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The registered provider ensured the service was insured, with insurance for 124 children until 27 March 2027. The records detailed the category of service covered which was full day care, the name and address of the premises and details regarding public liability cover, fire, theft, buildings, and outings cover.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-
(d) cleaned, maintained and repaired, as required, and

Compliance Information

- (d)
- The service appeared to be in a clean state throughout.
 - Routine cleaning schedules were in place in each care room of the service. Previous cleaning schedules were available for review by the inspectors and were noted to be completed.

Non-Compliance Information

(d) One of the toilets in the children's sanitary facility was not maintained in proper working order and required repair. It was observed that the seat of a toilet in the sanitary accommodation attached to the Junior Daycare room was broken and had been taped closed. It is acknowledged that the person in charge informed the inspectors that this toilet was not currently in use.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

In her written response, the registered provider stated that a plumber had been contracted to fix this toilet.

Supporting documentation submitted

The registered providers statement was accepted.

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Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The noncompliance identified under Regulation 29 (d) has been adequately addressed.