

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015DL052
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Name of Service:	Aurora's Hobbits Ltd
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Address of Service:	Aveltygort, Crossroads, Killygordon, Co. Donegal
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Eircode:	F93 X9YA
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Name of Registered Provider:	Aurora McAlynn
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Service type:	Full Day
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Date of Inspection:	13/05/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	26	PM	19
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, TUSLA Child & Family Agency Markievicz House, Barrack Street, Sligo F91 XC84
Inspection undertaken by:	S. Killeen L. Costello
Title:	Early Years Inspector

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

Aurora's Hobbits is a private childcare service located in a rural area in the townland of Killygordan, Co. Donegal. Full day care, part time and sessional care is offered to children aged 0-6 years old. Opening hours are from 07:30am-18:00pm, Monday-Friday. The service operates between two buildings located on either side of a private family home. The service has four care rooms, three of which were in operation on the day of the inspection. A sleep room, kitchen, staff room and office are also provided. The service has several play areas which are located to the front and side of the premises.

Staffing

There are five adults employed in the service. On the day of inspection four adults worked directly with the preschool children. The registered provider was working in the kitchen on the day of inspection.

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.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9,10,11,16(1)(k),17,19,23 and 27

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findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 10 Policies and procedures of a pre-school service and regulation 16 (1) (k) records in relation to a pre-school service.

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

Statutory Notices

Notice	Date Served	Detail
Improvement Notice IN1521	13/05/2026	The staffing levels while within minimum ratios were insufficient to meet the needs of the children, which is of significant concern that if it persists will cause a risk of harm to children. This was evidenced on the day with the number of incidents observed including hitting, punching, pushing children.
Status	The registered provider submitted corrective and preventive actions which addressed the statutory notice.	

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.

(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;*
- (b) Part VIIA (inserted by section 92 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013 (No. 40 of 2013)) of the Act, and*
- (c) these Regulations.*

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Compliance Information

- (1)
- (a) There was a designated person in charge and a named person to deputise as required.
- (b) The named person in charge, which was the registered provider, remained on the premises for the duration
- (2) Following a review of previous inspection information, information available on inspection and discussion with the person in charge it was determined that no new staff members had been employed since the previous inspection 11th March 2026. As existing files on last inspection were deemed to comply with regulations, no staff files were reviewed during this inspection. In addition, Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all five staff. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
- (4) The staff files reviewed at the previous inspection demonstrated that the five staff members held an appropriate childcare qualification.
- (7) The registered provider demonstrated that the three staff recently employed in the service received formal supervision on a quarterly basis to support them in their practice.

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 following policies were reviewed and found to have the required components.

- Comments and complaints.
- Supporting positive behaviour

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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

(2) The minimum adult-to-child ratios were maintained throughout the inspection. On the morning of the unannounced inspection, the ratios were as follows:

- In the Aragon room: 7 preschool children aged 3 to 4 years were supervised by 1 staff member.
- In the Frodo room: 8 preschool children aged 4 to 5 years were supervised by 1 staff member.
- In the wobbler/toddler room: 11 children aged 1 to 3 years were supervised by 2 staff members.

Non-Compliance Information

See statutory notice in relation to Improvement Notice IN152 served.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 16 – Record in relation to pre-school service

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of the following information in relation to the service:

(k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.

(3) A record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection on the premises, and the documents and records referred to in paragraph (2)(a) shall be open to inspection whether on the premises or elsewhere, by an authorised person.

(4) A record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection on the premises by a parent or guardian of a child but only in respect of information concerning that child.

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Compliance Information

(3) Incident records and an incident logbook were made available to the inspectors on the day.

Non-Compliance Information

(1)(k)

The service had two systems in place to record incidents and accidents. On a review of incidents and accidents forms and the accident and incident log between 12 March 2026 and 13 May 2026 inconsistencies arose. This dual recording system did not allow for the appropriate follow up and risk assessments or informing parents of incidents where children have kicked, slapped or punched children in the service. On discussion with the person in charge on the day, it was confirmed that incidents recorded in the logbook were not brought to the attention of management or parents.

(4)

Incidents recorded in the incident logbook to include a record of bites, hits, punches and kicks did not contain any evidence that parents have been informed of same.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(1)(k) The registered provider submitted new accident and incident forms that are now being used by the service, this includes a place for parents to sign. The registered provider stated that all new staff that commence future employment will follow the policies and procedures of recording accidents and incidents within the service.

(4) The registered provider submitted evidence of new accident and incident forms that are now being used by the service. The registered provider stated that all new staff that commence future employment will follow the policies and procedures of recording accidents and incidents within the service.

Supporting documentation submitted

- Submitted documentary evidence of new accident and incident books.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 16 (1) (k) (4) has been addressed.

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Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 17 – Information for parents

A registered provider shall ensure that a parent or guardian of a child proposing to attend the service is provided with the information referred to in subparagraphs (a) to (g) of Regulation 16(1).

Non-Compliance Information

1. The registered provider did not demonstrate that parents of children proposing to attend the service are provided with all the information outlined in regulation 16 (1) (a-g) as the most recent date of evidence of this information provided was on the 29/03/22.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

1. It is acknowledged that the registered provider submitted a response to the finding of non-compliance under Regulation 17; it did not address the findings of non-compliance identified on inspection.

Supporting documentation submitted

1. Email submitted for evidence of update policies that have been sent to parents

Summary Comment

This regulation remains non-compliant as the registered provider's response did not contain any corrective or preventive actions to address the non-compliance identified on inspection.

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*
- (b) appropriate and suitable care practices are in place in the pre-school service, having regard to the number of children attending the service and the nature of their needs.*

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Compliance Information

(1)(a)(b)

Basic needs

- The service promoted healthy eating. Food and snacks were provided at regular intervals during the day. For the main meal of the day children were observed eating chicken curry and rice. Young children had the opportunity to feed themselves appropriate to the age and state of development. Children's drinks were available within their reach throughout the session, should they feel thirsty at any stage.
- On the day of inspection, the children accessed the outdoor area. Waterproof clothing and footwear were available to the children.

Supporting relationships

- The staff members demonstrated warmth and sensitivity in their interactions with the children.
- During meals the staff members sat at the table and engaged in social conversation with the children, promoting a relaxed atmosphere. Staff held and interacted positively with children during bottle feeding. The staff members sat at the children's level when feeding the younger children or when assisting the children to feed themselves.
- Staff informed the inspector that communication with parents about the care needs of the children is completed at drop off and collection.

Non-Compliance Information

(1)(b)

1. The registered provider failed to ensure that the health, welfare, and developmental needs of the children were met in the preschool room. At 11:03, two staff members were supervising 11 preschool children. Of these children, six were aged between 1 and 1.8 years – three of whom were pre-walkers – and five were aged between 2 and 3 years. Due to this complex mix of ages and developmental stages, behaviours of concern escalated without effective intervention, resulting in children hitting each other with toys.

2. A behaviour management strategy was reviewed for one child who was observed struggling in the environment. Staff had recorded the required ABCs and a meeting with parents had taken place in January 2026. However, despite the management plan stating this would be reviewed in one week, no evidence of review was recorded, despite observations being recorded. The lack of review fails to address if strategies of managing behaviour required to be adjusted to support the needs of the child.

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Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

1. When management were made aware of the situation, management provided additional support. Since the inspection four new staff members have been employed. We have also employed a childcare quality officer who is not in ratio of a room but a floater, and they can step in when necessary to support our staff and children when needed.
2. Ensure the staff are following our supporting positive behaviour policy and procedure to ensure all children's health, welfare, and developmental needs of the children are being met. Following our new policies and procedures reviews are carried when needed to support children's behaviour in a timely manner. This will ensure that the non-compliance will not reoccur. Our childcare quality officer will ensure the staff are supported with this to prevent the non-compliance from reoccurring in the future.

Supporting documentation submitted

- 1.No evidence submitted.
- 2.Updated positive behavioural support plan submitted.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 19 have been 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 was found to be secured on arrival preventing unauthorised access or exit from the premises.
- The staircase was fitted with a low-level handrail for children's use.
- Materials were observed to be in a good state of repair.
- Warm running water was available for hand washing.
- Cleaning products and equipment were stored out of the reach of children.

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Infection Control:

- There was adequate handwashing facilities provided throughout the service with warm water, liquid soap and paper towels.
- Older children were observed to wash their hands with support, before snacks, meals and after nappy changing.
- The sanitary facilities were observed to be ventilated by openable windows.

Administration of Medication:

- No medication was administered on the day of inspection.

Safe Sleep:

- The service had a designated sleep room with appropriate cot available to children.
- Sleep checks were observed to occur every ten minutes.

Fire Safety:

- Fire doors were observed to be unobstructed throughout the service.
- Fire evacuation procedures were clearly displayed in the care rooms.
- Fire extinguishers were on the premises and easily accessible.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. A window in the downstairs bathroom in the Aragon room had no restrictor in place, which led out to the front of the premises. On the day of inspection, a bin was left below the window, creating a stepping stone for children to climb up to the window. Children were observed to use the bathroom independently.
2. A review of incidents in the Aragon room highlighted that on the 2 March 2026 and 10 April 2026, children had their fingers caught in the toilet door. No risk assessment had been completed for either incident report or no preventive measures were put in place to reduce the risk of fingers being caught contrary to service policy. A protective measure needs to be put in place to reduce this risk.

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Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. The bin was removed from under the window immediately and a window lock was put in place. Ensure the bin is not placed under the window again.
2. New finger pinch guards were purchased and installed following the inspection. Following our new accident and incident records this will ensure that there is no oversight on risk assessments.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

1. Photographic evidence submitted.
2. Photographic evidence submitted.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 23 has been adequately addressed.

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

- During mealtimes staff sat closely with the children at the tables, ensuring help was given when required.
- Staff were observed completing 10-minute sleep checks on the pre-school children.

Non-Compliance Information

1. The registered provider did not demonstrate that the service had considered the adult child ratios, the individual needs of the children and the activities the children are engaging in when ensuring adequate supervision as follows:
 - Two adults cared for 11 children in the outdoor area of the wobbler/toddler room at 11:02. One child was observed by the inspector being pushed down from a slide by another child. Concurrently, the available staff members were engaged with other children, leaving them unable to intervene or reach the child to ensure adequate supervision.

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- The registered provider failed to ensure children were adequately supervised during personal care. Inspectors observed a single staff member take a group of five children, aged 1 to 3 years, into the changing and toilet room together. While the staff member was completing changing a nappy, the other children were left unsupervised in the space. As a result, one child repeatedly opened the cubicle doors while two toilet-trained children were using the toilets. Because the staff member was fully occupied with the nappy change, they could not step in or redirect the child.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

1. When management were made aware of the situation, management provided additional support. We have also employed a childcare quality officer who is not in ratio within a room and is a floater and can step in when necessary to support our staff and children when needed.

Supporting documentation submitted

1. No evidence submitted.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 27 has been addressed.