

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report School Age Services

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2020MH001SA
Name of School Age Service:	Hi 5 Childcare
Name of Registered Provider(s):	Andrea Bittencourt
Address of School Age Service:	Brackinrainey Manor, Longwood, Co. Meath
Eircode:	A83 H019

Date(s) of Inspection:	9 April 2026
Number of school age children present during inspection:	PM 10
Registration status:	Registered

Address of the Early Years Inspectorate	Early Years Inspectorate 180-189 Lakeshore Drive Swords Co Dublin
Inspection undertaken by:	M. McDonnell
Title:	Early Years Inspector

Authority to Inspect
Tusla's Early Years Inspectorate carries out inspections of Early Years Services under Section 58(J) of the Child Care Act 1991 (as inserted by Section 92 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013).

Description of Service:

Hi 5 Childcare, based in Longwood, is a registered preschool and school age services operated by the registered provider. The service is based in a converted building in Co. Meath. The service provides care for children aged 4 to 12 years old from 7.30am to 6.30pm. The children have access to two care rooms, sanitary facilities, and an outdoor area onsite. There is also a kitchen onsite.

Staffing:

The registered provider is named as the person in charge of the service. The registered provider employs seven staff members; some staff members work solely with school-age children, whilst some work in the registered pre-school and school age service. The staff comprises two management staff, and five staff members who work directly with the children.

Additional Information:

This inspection was triggered by information received by the Inspectorate.

Legislation

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

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

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

- caters for children under the age of 15 years enrolled in a school providing primary or post-primary education,
- provides a range of activities that are developmental, educational and recreational in manner, which take place outside of school hours, the primary purpose of which is to care for children where their parents are unavailable, and
- the basis for access to which is made publicly known to the parents and guardians of the children referred to in point (a) above.

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

Inspection Methodology:

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

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

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

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

Inspection findings are documented in the School Age Services inspection report which is first issued in draft format to the service with an opportunity to respond to any findings. Where statutory requirements are identified as not being met, the registered provider must demonstrate how they have corrected the non-compliance and how they will prevent them from re occurring.

The Corrective Action and Preventive Action plan (CAPA) will be used to inform decisions about compliance with regulatory requirements. Where the registered provider fails to meet the statutory requirements, an escalation process may commence.

The Inspectorate reserves the right to edit CAPA responses received for reasons including clarity, completeness and compliance with administrative and legal processes.

The contents of the report are compiled by the Inspectorate body.

Acknowledgements:

The inspector wishes to acknowledge the co-operation of the children, deputy person in charge, and staff who were present on the day of inspection.

Summary of Findings:

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

- Regulation 8: Vetting disclosures.
- Regulation 9(1)(2): Staffing levels.
- Regulation 10 Policies.
- Regulation 11 Premises
- Regulation 12: Insurance.
- Regulation 13(1)(a)(b)(c)(2)(a)(b)(3)(a)(b): Complaints.

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

- Regulation 9(4): Staffing levels.
- Child Care Act 1991, Section 58(G) as amended by Part 12 of the Child and Family Agency Act, 2013.

Conclusion and follow up actions:

The actions and evidence submitted by the registered provider has addressed the non-compliances identified on inspection.

Regulation 8: Vetting disclosures

(1) A registered provider of a school age service other than a childminding service shall ensure that each employee, unpaid worker and contractor is suitable and competent, taking into consideration the nature of the needs of children, including by-

- (a) consideration of references from the person's past employers, if any, and in particular the most recent employer, if any,*
- (b) consideration of references from reputable sources in the case of a person who has no past employers,*
- (c) consideration of the vetting disclosure received from the National Vetting Bureau of the Garda Síochána in accordance with the Act of 2012 in respect of the person, 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.*

Regulatory Requirement Met

The inspector reviewed the staff files of the registered provider and seven staff members. There were two written references for the registered provider and two written and validated references available for each of the seven staff members from either a previous employer or source other than a previous employer. Garda Vetting disclosures were available for the seven staff members and the registered provider. The Garda Vetting disclosures available were dated within the last three years demonstrating compliance with the Renewal of Garda Vetting regulatory notice. Documentation available demonstrated that police vetting was either not required or available in English for the registered provider or seven staff members.

Regulation 9: Staffing levels

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

Regulatory Requirement Met

- (1)(2) On the day of inspection, there was a sufficient number of adults working directly with the children. There was one adult working directly with 10 children alongside the person in charge who was supernumery.

Regulatory Requirement not met

- (4) There was no documented supervision plan for staff to follow to ensure all children were appropriately supervised in the event of an emergency. Staff members noted that supervision arrangements were unclear in the event of supporting a child who attended the service.

It is acknowledged that the inspector observed appropriate supervision of children within the room, moving between activities and to the outdoor space on the day of inspection.

Corrective & Preventive Action Response submitted by the Registered Provider

- (4) A written supervision plan has been developed and shared with all staff to ensure clarity regarding supervision arrangements during emergency situations. The plan outlines staff responsibilities, the movement of children between rooms and outdoor areas, evacuation procedures, and supports for individual children. The plan has been discussed with all staff, who have confirmed their understanding of the procedures. The registered provider submitted evidence that this information was available to staff members to refer to as required. As a preventive action the manager will ensure that supervision arrangements are reviewed regularly during staff meeting and as part of ongoing risk assessments. All new and existing staff will

receive guidance on the training on the supervision plan and emergency procedure to ensure consistent implementation across the service. The supervision plan will be reviewed annually, or sooner if operational changes occur to ensure it remains effective and compliant with Tusla requirements.

Summary of Findings

The actions and evidence submitted by the registered provider, in their corrective and preventive action plan, has addressed the noncompliance identified on inspection.

Regulation 10: Policies of a school age service

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

Regulatory Requirement Met

The registered provider ensured that the following policies were available complaints policy and the behaviour management policy were available on site for staff.

Regulation 11: Premises

A registered provider of a school age service shall ensure that-

(a) an outdoor space to which the school age children attending the service have access on a daily basis is provided on the premises,

Regulatory Requirement Met

There was an outdoor area on the premises. There was a large grass area with a covered play area and indoor sand area. There were also two smaller play areas directly accessible from the care rooms. Low fencing was available around the small play areas, and the larger area was enclosed with high metal fences. A tall metal gate, leading to the front of the service, had a padlock.

Regulation 12: Insurance

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

Regulatory Requirement Met

The service had insurance cover for a maximum attendance of children in the service. Insurance cover was valid from the 28 March 2026 to the 27 March 2027.

Regulation 13: Complaints

- (1) A registered provider of a school age service other than a childminding service shall ensure that the complaints policy of the service specifies—*
- (a) the procedure to be followed by a person for the purposes of making a complaint in relation to the service,*
 - (b) the manner in which such a complaint shall be dealt with, and*
 - (c) the procedures for keeping a person who makes such a complaint informed of the manner in which it is being dealt with.*
- (2) A registered provider of a school age service other than a childminding service shall ensure that—*
- (a) a record in writing is kept of a complaint made to the provider in respect of the school age service, and*
 - (b) the complaint is duly dealt with in accordance with the provider's complaints policy.*
- (3) A record in writing referred to in paragraph (2)(a) shall—*
- (a) include the nature of the complaint and the manner in which the complaint was dealt with, and*
 - (b) be open to inspection on the premises by an authorised person.*

Regulatory Requirement Met

The complaints policy detailed the procedure for making a complaint, which included complaints from staff members and children. The policy detailed how verbal and written complaints would be dealt with, recorded and how a complainant would be kept informed of the complaints procedure and specified timelines for responses. The inspector was able to review a record of a recent complaint and correspondence with the complainant in line with the service's policy.

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

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

Regulatory Requirement Met

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

- The staff member working with the children was responsive and kind to children's requests and needs. They were observed offering comfort where required and being aware when children need support with their play or to support positive interactions with their peers.
- Children were given clear instructions and rationale for activities. For example, the children were getting ready to go outside when there was a heavy downpour of rain, the staff member spoke respectfully to the children around this change of plan and allowed a child to quickly check the weather outside. Once appropriate the staff member allowed the children to go outside.
- The staff member spoke of supporting children's individual needs. For example, a couple of children had created structures out of the building blocks and had not finished their playtime. They were allowed to leave these structures in place on their return from outdoor play.
- The service had records available, in line with their behaviour management policy, of identifying additional supports for children and communicating to parents.

Regulatory Requirement not met

1. The registered provider did not ensure that staff were fully trained and supported in addressing issues which arose in their practice. The inspector observed the following.
 - There were no records detailing new staff members probation period to demonstrate that they had been fully trained in the service's policies and

procedures. It is acknowledged that there were training records available for general and online training however, this was not the service's own policies and procedures.

- A sample of staff spoken with, detailed issues that had arisen in relation to behaviour management within their cohort of children. The staff members stated that concerns had been raised with management. However, there were no records available to demonstrate how these concerns had been addressed and improved.
2. The activities available for children did not always provide age-appropriate engagement. Whilst the inspector observed children playing with items such as building blocks, magnetic blocks and play dough, a sample of children spoken with stated that some of these items were not always available. Staff members spoken with confirmed that children had access to age-appropriate toys only at certain times and stated that this sometimes impacted on children's behaviour.

Corrective & Preventive Action Response submitted by the Registered Provider

1. The registered provider stated in their corrective action plan that all staff members were given time to read and familiarise themselves with the service's policies and procedures. Management also provided training on the key policies and procedures to ensure staff understood their roles and responsibilities. Following the meeting staff signed a confirmation of read and understanding the policies and procedures, and a copy has been placed on their personal file. At the time of the incident the staff who raised concerns was provided written response acknowledging receipt of the staff member's concerns and outlining the actions and measures that would be taken to address the issues raised. This letter has been printed now and placed on the staff member's personnel file to ensure appropriate record keeping and future reference. As a preventive action new staff members are given time to read the service's policies and procedures during their induction period. The service is currently developing a Staff Handbook containing a summary of the key policies and procedures and intends to have it available as soon as possible. Going forward, all new staff will receive a copy of the handbook as part of their induction. In addition, management will provide training on the service's policies and

procedures to ensure staff have a clear understanding of their roles, responsibilities, and the service's expectations. To ensure that training has been completed and understood, a staff induction and policy training sign-off form has been introduced. A copy of this was submitted to the inspectorate. This document will be signed by both the staff member and management and retained on the staff member's personnel file as evidence of training and successful completion of the probationary period. The service has implemented a procedure whereby all staff concerns raised with management, together with records of meetings, management responses, and any actions taken, will be retained on the relevant staff member's file. This will ensure that there is a clear record demonstrating how concerns have been addressed, monitored, and resolved and will be available for future reference and review.

2. The registered provider stated that children have full access to all toys and resources during free play time, and there are no restrictions placed on children regarding which toys they can choose to play with during these periods to ensure that the environment is open and child-led, supporting independence and choice in play. As a preventive action a meeting was held with staff to discuss the children's interests and engagement with the available toys and resources. Staff were asked to consult with the children and, together, create a list of toys and resources they would like to see added to the service. This will help maintain children's engagement and ensure a variety of play opportunities. The registered provider submitted a receipt for items purchased.

Summary of Findings

The registered provider has stated that the handbook is in development, however the measures as outlined in their corrective and preventive action plan, have addressed the noncompliance's identified on inspection. The actions taken by the registered provider will be reviewed on any follow up inspection.