

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2021FL001			
Name of Service:	Little Harvard Childcare Ltd			
Address of Service:	22 Muileann Drive, Kettles Lane, Kinsealy, Swords, Co. Dublin			
Eircode:	K67 X7Y5			
Name of Registered Provider:	James Hargrave			
Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional			
Date of Inspection:	26/05/2026			
No of pre-school children:	AM	60	PM	46
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	2 nd Floor, Unit 4/5 The Nexus Building, Blanchardstown Corporate Business Park, Ballycoolin, Dublin 15			
Inspection undertaken by:	Y Kelly & AM Coyle			
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).

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Description of service

Little Harvard Childcare Ltd. is one of multiple services owned and operated by the registered provider, all of which are located in counties Dublin, Wicklow and Kildare. Pre-school children are accommodated in this service on a sessional, part-time and full day care basis from the age of 12 months up to 6 years. School aged children up to 12 years of age are also accommodated in the service. The service operates from 7.30am to 6.00pm each weekday and facilitates eligible children to participate in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme from 9.00am to 12.00 midday daily. There are 6 early years care rooms provided in the purpose-built premises which is located in a housing estate in Kinsealy near Swords in north County Dublin. The Wobbler room, Toddler room, Pre-school room 1, Pre-school room 2, Pre-school room 3, Pre-school Room 4 (ECCE Room and School Age room) and the sleep room are all located on the ground floor whilst a kitchen and office space are provided on the first floor of the premises.

Staffing

A service manager is employed who oversees the operational management of this service, working with a team of 16 staff who work directly with the children including the deputy manager. Two staff members are employed for catering and household duties. There are two regional managers, 1 of whom was present on the day of the inspection along with the service manager. In addition, there was 2 staff members from another service providing cover on the day of the inspection. There are 2 staff employed to work in the school age room. There was 1 external contractor present on the day. The registered provider was not present in the service during the inspection.

Methodology

Tusla 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:

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

- 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 and safety. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under the regulations 9, 11, 19, 22, 23, 26 and 28, however, on inspection additional non-compliance which posed a risk was identified under regulation 20. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

As a result, the scope of the inspection included the Wobbler Room, Toddler Room, Pre-school Room 1, Pre-school Room 2, Pre-school Room 3 and Pre-school Room 4.

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, management team, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 9 – Management and recruitment

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

(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) There was a designated person in charge of the service and there was a named person to deputise as required.

(b) The service manager was present and in charge of the service when the inspectors arrived unannounced to the service at 09:15am.

(2) Following a review of previous inspection records and in discussion with the service manager, it was confirmed that 8 new staff members had commenced employment in the service since the last inspection which was carried out on the 29 July 2025. The full staff files for 10 adults were reviewed including 8 new staff members, 1 staff member from another service providing cover on the day of the inspection and 1 external contractor. Garda vetting for 12 adults was reviewed.

The following was recorded:

(a) Fifteen written validated references were available from past employers.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

- (b) Five written validated references were available from a reputable source other than a past employer.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures were available for 12 adults whose files were reviewed. Garda vetting disclosures demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring the service to renew Garda vetting every three years.
- (d) International Police vetting was available for 8 adults who had lived outside of the state for a period of more than 6 months.
- (4) Documentary evidence was available to confirm that 9 staff members whose files were reviewed and who may work directly with the children in the service held 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.

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) On the day of the inspection there was an adequate number of staff members working directly with the children attending the service.
- (2) The adult to child ratios were correct in the service when the inspectors arrived unannounced at the service and remained so throughout the inspection.

The following adult to child ratios were observed during the inspection:

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

- In the Wobbler Room there were 6 children aged 1 year 6 months to 2 years 1 month being cared for by 2 staff members.
- In the Toddler Room, there were 16 children aged 1 year 7 months to 2 years 10 months being cared for by 3 staff members.
- In Preschool Room 1 there were 10 children aged 2 years 8 months to 3 years 10 months being cared for by 1 staff member.
- In Preschool Room 2 there were 7 children aged 3 years to 4 years being cared for by 1 staff member.
- In Preschool Room 3 there were 13 children aged 4 years 3 months to 5 years 3 months being cared for by 3 staff members one of whom was employed to reduce the adult to child ratio, and to work directly with a child with additional needs, when necessary, in a post funded by the Minister as part of the Access and Inclusion Model scheme.
- In Preschool Room 4 there were 8 children aged 3 years 8 months to 5 years 2 months being cared for by 2 staff members one of whom was employed to reduce the adult to child ratio, and to work directly with a child with additional needs, when necessary, in a post funded by the Minister as part of the Access and Inclusion Model scheme.

(8)(a) The registered provider ensured that 2 adults were present in the service at all times. This was confirmed by the staff roster.

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) The following observations were made on how each child's learning, development and well-being was facilitated within the daily life in the service:

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Basic needs:

- Children's meals were cooked and served by designated staff members. On the day of the inspection the children had fruit and pancakes for morning snack, Beef Hungarian Goulash and vegetarian option of Bean and Vegetable Goulash with mashed potatoes for dinner and cream crackers with ham, cream cheese and cherry tomatoes for tea. There were alternative food options available for children with additional dietary requirements or preferences.
- The children's water bottles were readily available to them throughout the care rooms and in the outdoor areas for them to take as desired throughout the day.
- The children's personal care needs were attended to promptly. Nappies were changed at scheduled times and more frequently as needed. The staff members used the opportunity to engage with and chat to the children. The children who were toilet trained used the toilet independently. The children's hands and faces were cleaned by staff after snack time.
- Children attending the service were given the opportunity to spend time in the outdoor area during the inspection.

Supporting relationships and interactions around children:

- Staff demonstrated warm and caring interactions with the children. There was a welcoming atmosphere in the service. Appropriate communication using soft tones was observed and children were provided with comfort when needed. This supported the development of relationships and a sense of belonging.
- During transition to sleep, staff were available to assist the children in getting ready and helping them to settle whilst going to sleep.
- Staff complete a daily record sheet to share information about children's care needs with parents. This included information about meals, nappy changing and sleep.
- Identity and belonging were promoted in the service. For example, family wall photographs and photographs of the local community were displayed in the rooms.

Physical and material environment:

- There was age-appropriate furniture with small child sized chairs and tables for children to sit whilst they played or for mealtimes. Toys and equipment were visible and accessible to children on low level shelving which facilitated children's independence in play. The rooms were divided into different areas of interest which provided opportunities for a variety of spontaneous play experiences and choice for children. There were home corners and role play areas with wooden kitchen and dress up area, small world items such as

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

dolls house with furniture and dolls, animals, dinosaurs and transportation toys such as cars, wooden trains and train tracks to support imaginative and interactive play. Construction materials included wooden building blocks and plastic building bricks. There were tabletop materials such as jigsaws to support fine motor development. There were art and craft areas with art materials to include paint, glue, crayons and colouring pencils and paper to support creative art and mark making for children. Sensory play was supported including sand play at the tuff tray with shells, pots, pans and bowls. There were cosy areas equipped with floor mats, child sized soft sofa, cushions and a selection of books for reading and relaxation and providing opportunities for storytelling.

- Two fully enclosed outdoor areas are located to the rear of the service. Both areas were surfaced with artificial grass. The outdoor area accessed by the children attending the Wobbler room and Toddler room was resourced with two plastic slides, see-saw, buggies, ride on bikes and ride on cars all of which supported children's gross motor development. In addition, there was a play kitchen for dramatic play and a blackboard for mark making. The large outdoor area accessed by the pre-school and school aged children was resourced with two climbing frames one of which had a slide, suspension bridge and tyres which promoted safe risky play, gross motor and fundamental movement skills. There was also a covered area which enabled children to be outdoors regardless of weather conditions. There were kitchens areas with real-life saucepan and frying pan, bowls, cups and sieve which provided opportunities for dramatic play. A sandpit and two water trays provided opportunities for sensory play.

Programme of Activities and its Implementation:

- Children's learning and development is documented by observations of the children. Staff carry out planning which informs the curriculum.
- Transitions were observed to be well managed; children were given verbal and visual cues and sang songs at transition times during the daily routine to support them with the transitions. The children engaged well with tidying up, putting items away independently. Children were involved in transitions for example children were given jobs and responsibilities such as giving out water bottles to the other children. There was a timeline of the daily routine displayed on the wall using photographs. Routines provided for predictability and comfort for young children.
- An obstacle course and games were facilitated in the large outdoor play area by an external contractor on the day of the inspection.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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-

(b) there are adequate and suitable facilities for a pre-school child to rest during the day, and in the case of an overnight pre-school service, during the day and the night.

Non-Compliance Information

(1)(b) Adequate and suitable sleep facilities were not provided in the service for children under 24 months as demonstrated by the following:

- There were no cots available in the service for children under 24 months. The service is currently registered to provide care to children from 12 months. Staff members stated that children typically commence attendance in the service at 15 months and are automatically assigned to sleep on a floor bed. This is at variance to the 'Guidance for the early learning and care sector on sleep provision for children under 24 months' which emphasises that children's individual sleep needs are required to be met and outlines the safeguards required to be completed prior to a child under 24 months moving from a cot to a floor bed. The safeguards include consideration of a child's needs, parental involvement, risk assessments and appropriate equipment. The absence of cots impacts the service's requirement to provide adequate sleep facilities for children under 24 months, as there are no alternative options to the floor bed.
- The beds that were available for the children under 24 months were inadequate as they did not meet the requirements of the Tusla 'Guidance for the Early Learning and Care sector on sleep provision for children under 24 months.' The guidance document outlines the type of floor bed and mattress' required for children who have sleep plans in place to sleep on floor beds. The beds provided were stackable beds.
- A designated sleep room was not provided in the service for the children under 24 months. The Wobbler Room, where the youngest children aged 1 to 2 years attending the service are cared for, accommodates up to 8 children at any one time. The children slept on floor beds in the care room typically at one scheduled time. This is a service led approach rather than based on the individual needs of the children. Considering the service can accommodate children from 12 months onwards, the ability to provide child-led sleep practices is impacted. It was recorded in the services' last fit for purpose inspection carried out on 30 March 2021 that the service had a designated sleep room with 10 standard cots for children under 24 months. This was no longer available.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective Action

(1)(b) The service acknowledges the inspection finding regarding sleep provision for children under 24 months. At the time of the inspection, the youngest child attending the service was 18 months old. The service currently uses cocoon beds specifically designed for use in early years settings. Following the inspection, the service has confirmed that no child under 24 months is to sleep on stackable beds. Children under 24 months will sleep in a cocoon bed or a cot, where required, based on an individual sleep assessment, documented risk assessment and the child's individual developmental needs.

Following the inspection the Centre Manager was retrained on the service's sleep policy and the Tusla Guidance for the Early Learning and Care Sector on Sleep Provision for children under 24 months. The Regional Manager has reviewed all sleep procedures and will monitor compliance through regular audits to ensure all required documentation is completed prior to any transition from a cot to a cocoon bed.

All children under 24 months currently attending the service now have an individual sleep plan, documented sleep risk assessment and written parental agreement in place. These records will be reviewed regularly to ensure they continue to reflect each child's individual sleep needs and stage of development. As an interim control measure, children who have been individually assessed as developmentally suitable will sleep in cocoon beds. No child under 24 months will transition to a stackable bed or floor beds. To fully address the inspection finding, from September 2026, Little Harvard will introduce dedicated foldable cots and will continue to have cocoon beds available for children under 24 months, where appropriate, based on an individual's sleep risk assessment, the child's developmental needs, and documented parental agreement.

Preventive Action

(1)(b) Going forward, the Centre Manager, Regional Manager and the Operations Manager will complete regular audits of sleep practices, documentation and risk assessments to ensure ongoing compliance with the regulations and Tusla Guidance, and to ensure that each child's individual sleep needs continue to be met.

Supporting documentation submitted

- Photographs of cocoon beds.

Summary Comment

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliances under Regulation 20 have been addressed.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 22 – Food and drink

A registered provider shall ensure that adequate and suitable, nutritious and varied food and drink is available for each pre-school child attending the pre-school service.

Compliance Information

Nutritionally balanced snacks and meals were detailed on the service's 3 weekly menu on display in the premises. A cook is employed to prepare and serve the morning snack and the dinner in the service. Staff cooked meals and prepared snacks for the children on the day of the inspection. The hot meal provided in the service is cooked using fresh ingredients in the service kitchen. Dietary requirements specified by the parents were accommodated and observed in practice during the inspection. On the day of the inspection the children had a morning snack of fruit and pancakes, Beef Hungarian Goulash and vegetarian option of bean and Vegetable Goulash with mashed potatoes for dinner and cream crackers with ham, cream cheese and cherry tomatoes for tea. Breakfast is also provided to include a selection of cereals, bread or toast soldiers with butter. There were alternative food options available for children with additional dietary requirements or preferences. The children's water bottles were available for the children to take from low-level shelves, should they feel thirsty at any stage during the day.

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 door leading into the service was appropriately secured to prevent the children from exiting unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the premises.
- The kitchen was inaccessible to the children during the inspection.
- The outdoor play area was fully enclosed and secured and was mainly surfaced with artificial grass.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

- Cleaning agents were stored safely out of the reach of the children.
- Suncream was observed being applied to the children for outdoor play. Each child had their own suncream provided by parents.

Infection Control:

- Thermostatically controlled water, liquid hand soap and dispensed handtowels were available in the sanitary facilities.
- Children were observed to hand wash independently after use of the toilet, after outdoor play and before lunchtime, and this was encouraged and supported by staff.

Administration of Medication:

- Medications were stored out of the reach of children. No children were observed having medication administered on the day of inspection.
- Children's health care plans were kept in the care rooms.

Safe Sleep:

- The inspectors observed that 10-minute sleep check observations were being performed and documented on sleeping children, noting each child's colour, position and breathing pattern at the time of each check.
- Fresh linen was put on stackable beds for each child to sleep on.

Fire Safety:

- Emergency exits were unobstructed in the event of an emergency evacuation.

Non-Compliance Information

Safe Sleep:

1. Sleep plans including risk assessments were not available for 5 children under 24 months who slept on stackable beds on the floor in the Wobbler room. This is at variance to the 'Guidance for the early learning and care sector on sleep provision for children under 24 months', which states that a sleep plan must be agreed and signed by a parent/guardian and the registered provider/person in charge to demonstrate that the child is developmentally ready to sleep on a floor bed.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective Action

Safe Sleep:

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

1. Risk assessments and individual sleep plans have now been completed for all 5 children under 24 months of age. Each sleep plan has been discussed with and signed by the child's parent/guardian and the Creche manager. In addition, all educators have been retrained on the sleep policy. Staff have been reminded of the requirement that no child under 24 months may transition to a floor bed without a completed sleep risk assessment and signed sleep plan in place.

Preventive Action

1. Local and senior management will carry out a regular audit of children's records to ensure all required documentation is completed and maintained in line with the regulations and the services policies.

Supporting documentation submitted

- Sleep plans for 5 children under 24 months of age.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliances under Regulation 23 have been addressed.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 26 - Fire safety measures

- (1) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of-*
- (a) any fire drill that takes place in the premises, and*
 - (b) the number, type and maintenance record of fire fighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises.*
- (4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of fire shall be displayed in a conspicuous position in the premises.*

Compliance Information

- 1 (a) A record of fire drills was available on the premises with the last fire drill dated as having been carried out on the 28 April 2026.
- (b) The number, type and maintenance record for firefighting equipment and smoke alarms were available. Firefighting equipment was last serviced on the 29 April 2026, and the smoke alarms were serviced on the 18 March 2026.
- (4) Fire evacuation procedures were displayed throughout the service.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

Evidence of insurance cover was available to demonstrate there was cover for a maximum of 86 children for full day care with an expiry date of 27 March 2027.