

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

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| <b>TUSLA Identifier:</b> | TU2015DR150 |
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| <b>Name of Service:</b> | Links Childcare |
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| <b>Address of Service:</b> | Sommerset House, Stradbrook Road, Blackrock, Co. Dublin |
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| <b>Eircode:</b> | A94 V295 |
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| <b>Name of Registered Provider:</b> | Deirdre Kelly |
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| <b>Service type:</b> | Full Day, Part Time, Sessional |
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| <b>Date 1 of Inspection:</b> | 22/07/2024 |
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| <b>Date 2 of Inspection:</b> | 23/07/2024 |
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| <b>No of pre-school children:</b> | AM | 119 | PM | 119 |
| <b>Day 2</b>                      | AM | 134 | PM | 132 |

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| <b>Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:</b> | 1st floor Trinity Building, IDA Business Park, Southern Cross Road, Bray, Co. Wicklow |
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| <b>Inspection undertaken by:</b> | Sarah Quigley & Fiona Carty |
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| <b>Title:</b> | Early Years Inspectors |
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### 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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| <b>Conditions if applicable</b> | Not Applicable |
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### Description of service

Links Childcare is a full day care service located in an urban, residential area of Blackrock, South County Dublin. A service is provided to children aged between 6 months and 6 years and a facility for school aged care is also provided within the premises. The premises is a two-story purpose-built facility consisting of six care rooms on the ground floor and six care rooms on the upper floor. Designated sleep rooms are provided on the ground floor and two outdoor play areas are available to the children, one on the ground floor and a roof top terrace on the upper floor. The service is open from Monday to Friday between 7:30 and 18:30 hours.

### Staffing

The service currently employs 43 staff members, including a cook. The registered provider does not work directly in the service. On the first day of inspection 36 staff members were present including 5 adults who worked with school aged children and 37 on the second day.

### 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/information and records/ health, welfare and development of child/ safety. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

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 area manager, persons in charge, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

## Part III – Management and Staff

### Regulation 9 – Management and recruitment

*(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.*

*(3) The procedures specified in paragraph (2) shall be carried out prior to any person being appointed, assigned or allowed access to or contact with a child attending the pre-school service.*

*(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

- (2)
- Following a discussion with the person in charge it was confirmed that 34 adults had commenced working in the service since regulation 9 was last inspected on the 21<sup>st</sup> September 2022. Documentation required under regulation 9(2)(3)(4) was reviewed in respect of these 34 adults as detailed below. The requirements of Regulation 9(2)(c) were assessed for all adults employed to work in the service.
- (a) (b) There were 2 references each available for each of the 34 adults which had been appropriately verified.
  - (c) Garda vetting disclosures were available for all adults working in the service. These documents were dated within the correct timeframe in compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years for all adults.
  - (d) International Police vetting was available for the 33 adults who required it.
- (3) Documentation reviewed evidenced that the procedures specified under Regulation 9(2) as detailed above had been completed prior to each of the adult's commencing employment in the service.
- (4) The 34 adults held at least a major award in Early childhood Care and Education at Level 5 on the National Qualifications Framework.

### 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

- (1) An adequate number of adults were working directly with the pre-school children attending the service during the inspection.
- (2) The registered provider ensured that the minimum ratio of adults to children was maintained in the service on the day of inspection. There were 119 children present in the service being supervised by 28 adults on the 1<sup>st</sup> day of inspection and 134 children present being supervised by 29 adults on the 2<sup>nd</sup> day. The centre managers supported staff members in the care rooms and provided relief cover where required.

### Part IV – Information and Records

#### Regulation 15 – Record of pre-school child

*(1) A registered provider of a pre-school service other than a pre-school service in a drop-in centre or a temporary pre-school service shall ensure that a record in writing is kept in respect of each pre-school child attending the service containing the following particulars:*

- (a) the name and date of birth of the child;*
- (b) the date on which the child first attended the service;*
- (c) the date on which the child ceased to attend the service;*
- (d) the name and address of a parent or guardian of the child and a telephone number where that parent or guardian or a relative or friend of the child can be contacted during the hours of operation of the service;*
- (e) authorisation for the collection of the child;*
- (f) details of any illness, disability, allergy or special need of the child, together with all the information relevant to the provision of special care or attention;*

- (g) the name and telephone number of the child's registered medical practitioner;*
- (h) record of immunisations, if any, received by the child;*
- (i) written parental consent for appropriate medical treatment of the child in the event of an emergency.*

### Compliance Information

A sample of 20 records of preschool children maintained in the service were reviewed by the inspector to assess compliance. The documentation reviewed evidenced that each of the records detailed all of the required information outlined under Regulation 15(1)(a) to (i) as detailed above.

## 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-*
  - (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.*

### Compliance Information

The inspector observed appropriate care practices in place during the inspection. The children moved freely in each care room independently choosing what activities they would like to engage in both alone and with staff members. Older children used the toilet independently and children wearing nappies had these changed regularly. Staff availed of opportunities throughout the inspection for warm one to one interaction with the children and responded promptly to cues for care. Staff interacted warmly with the children and used gentle tones during conversations, addressing children by name and speaking to them at their level.

Meals and snacks were provided by the service at regular intervals to the children throughout the inspection. Staff sat with the children during mealtimes creating a homely, relaxed atmosphere. Self-feeding was promoted in the younger care room and staff assisted children where required.

Younger children wore bibs to protect their clothing during mealtimes. Drinking water was available within the rooms and was offered regularly to the children. Staff promoted personal care, encouraging children to wash hands and clean their faces at appropriate times.

Younger babies were placed to sleep in line with their individual care needs. The designated sleep rooms were calm and conducive to sleep. Older children were provided with the opportunity to sleep after dinner time. Designated rest areas were provided within the rooms where children could relax or take a break from activities.

### Non-Compliance Information

1. The transition from mealtime to sleep was not managed appropriately in the Wobbler 3 room on the 1<sup>st</sup> day of inspection. A designated sleep period was in place which did not meet the individual needs of the children present as evidenced by the following:
  - From 11:44 am – 12:42 pm, children were encouraged to lay on low level beds and the care room was darkened. During this time, a number of children displayed no signs of tiredness and were observed running around the care room. Some of these children were observed disturbing children who were trying to sleep, speaking loudly and falling onto their beds whilst running around the care room.
2. Some of the behaviour management practices observed in the Toddler 1 room were ineffective for conflict resolution and did not promote positive behaviour strategies when dealing with minor disputes between children. For example, some children were observed repeatedly hurting their peers during the transition from play to tea time. Staff members who intervened did not address the negative behaviours or encourage the children to resolve the conflict which is at variance with the behaviour management policy in place in the service.
  - Two children attending the Toddler 1 room were observed for prolonged periods of time on the 1<sup>st</sup> day of inspection using a soother from 10:30am to 12pm. The children were not upset and were moving freely around the care room during this time, playing and interacting with peers. This may negatively impact on speech development and dental health.

### Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

#### Corrective and Preventive Action

1. The policy at Links Childcare is always to encourage sleep only at times the children have indicated that they are tired and to work around the routine that they have established at home. On this day in Wobbler 3, what was observed would not have been standard practice and can perhaps be explained by the fact that there were very new staff at this time in July. A lack of experience certainly contributed to the disorganisation around sleep time. Immediately after the inspection and for the days following, training was given by both the manager and the regional manager to the staff in that room to ensure that best practice was understood and observed.

2. This and the next non-compliance (3 below) occurred in Toddler 1 where again at this time of the year the staff were ‘finding their feet’ having just begun in the setting. This is not in any way to excuse the fact that children were observed as not being exposed to strategies that would help them around conflict resolution. Full training on this occurred the day after the inspection and forms part of regular full-crèche CPD.
3. It is policy to allow a child to have a soother only at sleep time or if very upset. It is acknowledged that in the case of two children in Toddler 1, children were allowed to have a soother for a lengthy period of time. The policy has been reviewed and revisited with the staff in the room and there is a full understanding now of exactly what should be done. Again, training on this issue was done by the regional manager in the immediate aftermath of the inspection.

The service is confident that the relevant training discussed above will avoid this non-compliance into the future. It is not something that occurs regularly in any of our crèches and the service hopes that with focused training, as happened, there will be no re-occurrence. During the training session the regional manager noted a willingness to learn and to practise strategies to modify behaviour and yet remain within the parameters of the service’s Promoting Positive Behaviour Policy. Staff showed enthusiasm for the subject of conflict resolution and willingness to implement it, which the service feels augurs well for the future, in terms of avoiding non-compliance’s in this area. The staff are fully aware of the policy on soothers. The Manager as agreed to monitor the room regularly to ensure no repeat of bad practice.

### **Supporting documentation submitted**

Supporting documentation was submitted and reviewed by the early years inspectors.

### **Summary Comment**

The regulatory requirement has been met.

## 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

The inspector found by observation of practice, review of documentation, discussion with staff and inspection of the premises that the registered provider had taken the following steps to safeguard children attending:

#### General Safety:

The toys and play equipment observed in use by the children on the day of inspection were safe and in good working order. Cleaning products and hazardous materials were stored securely out of reach of the children. The entrances into the service were appropriately secured to prevent unauthorised access or a child exiting the service unsupervised. The care rooms were observed to be safe and free from hazards.

#### Infection Control:

An infection control policy was in place to inform practice. Schedules were in place and maintained to ensure the service, equipment and materials are regularly cleaned. Staff stated appropriate exclusion periods for adults and children with infectious illnesses were implemented in the service as per the policy. Pedal operated bins were in place throughout the service for the disposal of waste.

#### Administration of Medication:

There was written evidence of prior parental consent for the administration of both temperature reducing and prescribed medications, and there were procedures in place to safely administer and document such medication if required, including in the case of an emergency. Staff adequately detailed the procedures for administering medication when required during discussions with the inspectors and had appropriate documentation available to record such administration if required.

#### Safe Sleep:

Staff demonstrated they were familiar with safe sleep guidance. Sleep logs were maintained in the dedicated sleep room and the Toddler room, and individual children's observations recorded room temperature, breathing, colour, and position every ten minutes. Standard cots and low-level beds were available for sleep and were used in accordance with children's ages and developmental needs. The temperature of the rooms where children slept were maintained at the required temperature ranges.

### Fire Safety:

The designated fire escape routes were clearly indicated and free from obstruction on the day of inspection. Staff members adequately outlined the evacuation procedures in place in the event of a fire and stated that fire drills are practiced regularly on a monthly basis.

### Non-Compliance Information

#### Infection Control:

The handwashing practices observed in some care rooms were inconsistent and at variance with the policy in place in the service as follows:

- Children attending the Wobbler 3 and the Toddler 1 rooms hands were not all washed prior to teatime posing a risk of cross contamination.

### Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

#### Corrective & Preventive Action

#### Infection Control:

This non-compliance was noted in the same rooms as above (Wobbler 3 and Toddler 1) and formed part of the training by the Regional Manager. It was noted at the feedback session that many children's hands were washed (as would be fully expected) but a lack of a system meant that some children were missed. The focus of the training was the communication around the implementation of that system for the new staff.

As above, washing of hands is central to all on-going training and will continue to be. The staff in the two rooms were monitored and supported in the days after the inspection. This aspect will feature as always, in on-going practical CPD sessions.

#### Supporting documentation submitted

Supporting documentation was submitted and reviewed by the early years inspector.

### Summary Comment

The regulatory requirement has been met.

### 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)  
An adult trained in First Aid Responder (FAR) training was available to the children on both days of inspection.
- (2)  
  - (a) The first aid box was stored in a conspicuous location within the service.
  - (b) A first aid box was available in the service at all times on the day of inspection.

### 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 written record was available detailing fire drills that had taken place in the service.
  - (b) There was record to show that the firefighting equipment had been serviced and that maintenance of the fire detection and alarm system had taken place as required.
- (4)  
The procedures to be followed during a fire drill and in the event of a fire were displayed in a conspicuous location within the service.

### Part VI - Safety

#### Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

#### Compliance Information

Documentation reviewed evidenced that the service was adequately insured for the type of service provided and the number of children in attendance.