

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015DS207
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Name of Service:	Links Childcare
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Address of Service:	Silken Park, Kingswood, Citywest, Co. Dublin
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Eircode:	D22 TH92
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Name of Registered Provider:	Gillian Kelly
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	30/10/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	75	PM	77
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	1st floor Trinity Building, IDA Business Park, Southern Cross Road, Bray, Co. Wicklow.
Inspection undertaken by:	Sarah Quigley & Helen Sutherland
Title:	Early Years Inspector(s)

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).

Conditions if applicable	Not applicable
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Description of service

Links Childcare is a full day care service located in an urban, residential area of Citywest, South Co. Dublin and is one of fourteen Links Childcare early years services. Care and education are provided to children aged between six months and six years. The service is open from Monday to Friday between 07:30 and 18:30 hours. The service operates from a purpose-built single storey premises. Children are allocated to one of seven care rooms dependant on their age and stage of development. A separate dining area is available to the children in the older care rooms, and a large outdoor play space is located to the rear and side of the building.

Staffing

The service currently employs thirty-two staff members including a centre manager, and a cook. The registered provider does not work directly in the service. On the day of inspection, twenty-seven staff members were present and an adult partaking in a work placement programme. Two regional managers arrived to the service to support the centre manager and facilitate the 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/ information and records/ health, welfare and development of child/ safety. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required. The following regulations were assessed;

Regulation 9 – Management and recruitment

Regulation 11 - Staffing levels

Regulation 15 – Record of pre-school child

Regulation 19 - Health, welfare and development of child

Regulation 23 - Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child

Regulation 27 – Supervision

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under Regulation 15 Record of a Pre-School Child, and under Regulation 19 - Health, welfare and development of child. As a result, the scope of the inspection pertaining to Regulation 19 included the Jellyfish Room, the Octopus Room, the Dolphin Room, and the Sealion Room.

Inspection findings are documented in the inspection report which is first issued in draft format to the service with an opportunity to respond to any findings. Where statutory requirements are identified as not being met, the registered provider must demonstrate how they have rectified the non-compliance and will prevent any non-compliance from re occurring. The Corrective Action and Preventive Action plan (CAPA) will be used to inform decisions about compliance with regulatory requirements. Where the registered provider fails to meet the statutory requirements an escalation process may be commenced.

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

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

Acknowledgments

The inspectors wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the person in charge, staff, children and regional managers 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 twenty adults had commenced working in the service since regulation 9 was last inspected on the 30th October 2024. Documentation required under regulation 9(2)(3)(4) was reviewed in respect of these twenty adults as detailed below.

(a) (b) There were two references each available for the twenty adults which had been appropriately verified.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures were available for the twenty adults. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years for all adults employed to work in the service.

(d) Eighteen of the new employees required International Police vetting, the required documentation was available for the eighteen adults.

(4) Nineteen of the adults held at least a major award in Early childhood Care and Education at Level 5 on the National Qualifications Framework. One of the adults did not require a qualification and was employed under a work placement programme.

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 children throughout the inspection. There were twenty-one adults allocated to work directly with seventy-seven children during the inspection. The centre manager and deputy manager were available to assist and provide support in the care rooms where required.
- (2) The minimum adult to child ratio requirement was maintained in accordance with the ages and type of service delivered.

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 twelve records of the pre-school children in attendance were reviewed to assess compliance with Regulation 15. Each of the twelve records reviewed contained the necessary details relating to Regulation 15(1)(a) – (i).

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

The inspectors observed that the children's learning, development and well-being was supported during the inspection. The indoor play environments were laid out to support the children's independence. Low level hooks were provided for bags and coats with the children's names and photographs attached. There were some interest areas including construction, sensory play tables, dress up, and home corners. Play materials were visible and accessible to the children on open, low-level shelves. Areas with soft furnishings were available for children to rest or take a break from activities, and drinks of water were accessible to the children at all times.

The older children were supported to be independent with their personal care. They used the toilet as needed with staff reminding them to wash their hands afterwards, they were encouraged to clean their faces after eating, and tidy up following mealtimes and play. Younger children had their nappies changed at regular intervals and as required. Regular meals and snacks were offered to the children, including a hot dinner which were all provided by the service. Adults sat with the children when they were eating engaged in conversation, and encouraged younger babies to self-feed. The inspectors observed the staff interacting warmly with the children throughout the inspection and engaging with them in a positive manner.

Staff responded promptly to younger children's cues for care and provided comfort to children who became upset. Babies were placed to sleep in line with individual care needs and older children were provided with the opportunity to sleep at a designated time. Children were made comfortable for sleep, with staff removing their shoes and heavy outer clothing, and provided soothers and comforters to those who used them. The

environments were calm and conducive to sleep, staff sat with the children speaking quietly and soothing them as needed.

Children's identity and belonging was promoted through art displays and family photograph books and wall displays. Staff reported they maintain a written record of each child's diet, activities, sleep, and toileting to communicate back to parents at drop-off/collection times. Staff stated parents can call the care rooms at any time and that an open door policy is in place in the service.

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 inspectors found through 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 the 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 and outdoor play area 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 and children were observed to carry out consistent hand washing as appropriate. 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 were familiar with safe sleep guidance and detailed the safe sleep procedures in place in the service during discussions with the inspectors. Sleep logs were maintained in the cot rooms and the care rooms where children slept, and individual 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:

1. Some of the practices observed during nappy changing posed a risk of cross contamination. Staff members were observed placing soiled nappies, wipes and protective gloves into nappy bags inside the handwash sink used by staff and children.
2. A staff member was observed using a face cloth to clean a child's face after eating. The staff member then used this face cloth to clean another child's highchair table whilst they were seated in it and left the cloth resting on their table, posing a risk of cross contamination.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

The registered provider submitted the following response:

Corrective & Preventive Action

Infection Control:

1. At a CPD meeting on 2 December 2025, all staff will be re-trained on the nappy changing policy, paying particular attention to the risks around cross contamination. Management will complete regular spot checks to ensure adherence to the nappy changing policy. Nappy changing will be included as a standard refresher topic on CPD meetings moving forward.

- At the CPD meeting on 2 December 2025, all staff will receive refresher training on proper hygiene and cleaning protocols, including correct use of face-cloths at the scheduled CPD Meeting. Specific instructions will be given to staff on the use of face cloths hygienically. The management team will reinforce that cleaning materials are area-specific and task-specific, to prevent cross-contamination.

Supporting documentation submitted

Infection Control:

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

Summary Comment

The regulatory requirement has been met. The actions as stated by the registered provider will address the non-compliance.

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 the inspection, children were observed to be appropriately supervised at all times by the staff members present.