

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015FL145			
Name of Service:	The Links Creche & Montessori Limited			
Address of Service:	St. Olaves, Malahide Road, Kinsealy, Co. Dublin			
Eircode:	K36 NR04			
Name of Registered Provider:	Gillian Kelly			
Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional			
Date of Inspection:	06/08/2025			
No of pre-school children:	AM	69	PM	69
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	180-189 Lakeshore Drive, Airside Business Park, Swords, Co Dublin K67 Y5C6			
Inspection undertaken by:	AM Coyle & Y Kelly			
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).				
Conditions if applicable	Not applicable			

Description of service

The Links Creche & Montessori Limited is one of the company's 14 early years services operated in Dublin city and county which provides sessional, part-time and full day care from Monday to Friday for 51 weeks of the year. The service is registered to cater for a maximum of 114 pre-school children and accommodates pre-school children from 6 months to 6 years of age. School age children are not accommodated in this service. The service operates from 7.30am to 6.30pm. The service is conducted on two levels and within two separate units in a row of commercial premises located in a residential setting. A communal lift and a stairwell are in place in the premises, connecting the two floors. The split-level layout of the building facilitates access directly from street level to an entrance hallway and three care rooms on the lower ground floor, namely the Jellyfish Room, the Octopus Room and the Dolphin Room. Separate pedestrian access is facilitated to a different entrance hallway and three care rooms on the upper floor on the opposite side of the building, namely the Sea Turtle Room, the Starfish Room and the Seahorse Room. A fully enclosed safety-surfaced outdoor play area, separated by fencing into two distinct spaces, is provided to the side of the premises on the lower ground floor

Staffing

There are 21 staff members employed to work in The Links Creche & Montessori Limited. On the day of the inspection there were 20 adults present in the service including the service manager, area manager and 17 staff working directly with the children. A chef is employed in the service. The registered provider was present in the service during the course of 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/ health, welfare and development of child/ safety and premises. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9, 11, 19,23,25 and 26. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 19 - Health, welfare and development of child. As a result, the scope of the inspection included the Jellyfish room, the Octopus room the Dolphin room and the Sea Turtle 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 registered provider, person in charge, area manager staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

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

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

(b) The service manager was present and in charge of the service when the inspectors arrived unannounced on the morning of the inspection.

The files for 21 staff members were reviewed including the files for the area manager, service manager, 18 staff members who work directly with the children and the chef employed in the service. The registered providers file was reviewed at a previous inspection of the service.

(2)(a) Thirty-two validated written references were available from a previous employer.

(b) Ten validated written references were available from a source other than a previous employer.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures were available for the 21 staff members whose files were reviewed. All the Garda vetting records reviewed demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) International police vetting was available for the 15 staff members whose files were reviewed and who had resided outside of the Irish jurisdiction for more than 6 consecutive months as adults.

(4) Documentary evidence was available to confirm that the 20 staff members including the area manager whose files were reviewed and who work directly with the children in the service held an appropriate childcare qualification at level 5 or higher on the National Framework of Qualifications or a qualification deemed by the minister to be equivalent.

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 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 and remained so throughout the inspection.

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

- In the Jellyfish Room there were 8 children aged between 12 months and 1 year 7 months being cared for by 4 staff members.
- In the Octopus Room there were 12 children aged between 1 year 9 months and 2 years 5 months being cared for by 3 staff members.
- In the Dolphin Room there were 13 children aged between 1 year 11 months and 3 years being cared for by 3 staff members.
- In the Sea Turtles Room, there were 15 children aged 3 years and 3 years 11 months being cared for by 2 staff members.
- In the Starfish room there were 12 children aged 4 years 11 months and 5 years months being cared for by 2 staff members.
- In the Seahorse Room, there were 9 children aged 4 years and 4 years 8 months being cared for by 2 staff members.

(8)(a) The registered provider ensured that 2 adults were present on the premises at all times, as evidenced in staff rosters and staff attendance records maintained in the service.

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 are examples of how each child's learning, development and well-being was facilitated within the daily life of the service:

Basic needs:

- There was a healthy eating policy in place in the service and healthy meals and snacks were provided for the children by the onsite chef at regular intervals throughout the day. Mealtimes were observed to be a pleasant unhurried experience with children given plenty of time to enjoy their meals. Staff members were observed sitting with the children engaging them in conversation whilst encouraging them to eat. The staff members in the Jellyfish room and the Dolphin room sat in front of the children who required assistance with eating warmly engaging with the children at their eye level. Throughout the care rooms

the children's water bottles were accessible to them on low level shelving for them to take as desired throughout the day.

- Children's nappies were changed at scheduled times throughout the day and more frequently as required with staff members observed interacting positively with the children during this time and using it as an opportunity for warm one to one interaction. Older children were encouraged to use the toilet independently with discreet supervision and support provided when required.
- Comfortable rest areas including appropriately sized couches, floor mats and cushions were available throughout all the care rooms for the children to retreat to should they feel tired. The children attending the Jellyfish room were observed being placed to sleep in a sleep room on the ground floor of the service when they exhibited signs of tiredness and if their sleep time coincided with mealtimes, they were given their meals when they woke up. The children in the other care rooms who still availed of a day-time nap were placed to sleep for a scheduled period of rest after dinner.
- The children throughout all of the care rooms in the service engaged in outdoor play on a number of occasions on the day of inspection.
- Staff members were observed using distraction and problem-solving techniques to good effect to prevent the escalation of any minor issues that took place between the children.

Supporting relationships:

- The staff members were observed to work well together and supported each other in the care of the children, modelling positive ways of interacting with each other and the children. Staff members updated each other on the children's care throughout the day which ensured the children's care needs were met in a timely manner.
- A child who was in the process of settling into the Jellyfish room on the day of inspection was observed to be well supported with staff members mindful of the child's need for extra support, providing lots of nurturing and cuddles to enable the child to settle.
- A written record of the children's meals, activities, general wellbeing and if relevant nappy changes and sleep were maintained and shared with parents when the children were being collected from the service. Parent and staff members exchanged information verbally at drop-off and collection with additional contact made when required.

Physical and material environment:

- The low-level shelving units that were provided throughout all of the care rooms in the service ensured that the equipment and materials were accessible to the children facilitating their free choice. Furthermore, the children demonstrated familiarity with their environment to access the play equipment and resources they chose to play with.
- The learning environments within each of the 4 sampled care rooms in the service were appropriate to the age and stage of the children attending the individual rooms. The care rooms were bright and welcoming with a variety of well-resourced interest areas which were spacious enough for the children to play in pairs and small groups with children observed to play together throughout the inspection. Interest areas in the care room included home areas with a wide variety of play resources including cooking utensils, crockery, dolls house, dolls with baby care materials all of which facilitated the children to extend their play. Additionally, construction resources, transport toys, tabletop materials and arts and crafts materials were provided for the children to play with.
- The Jelly fish room which accommodates the youngest children in attendance was spacious and provided space for the children to crawl, explore and move around. Equipment included a wall mounted mirror and push along toys which provided the children with opportunities to engage in physical and gross motor activity through self-initiated movement
- A wide range of books were available in the library areas of the care rooms which provided choice and supported children's language development. The children were observed being read to and enjoying books throughout the day.
- Outdoor play was facilitated in the service's outdoor play area located to the side of the premises at lower ground floor level, with fencing in place establishing this space into two distinct areas, each of which was covered in impact-absorbent material. In one of the 2 areas a climbing frame was provided with steps and a slide for the children to enjoy along with ride on toys, space was available for the children to move freely. In the area used by the younger children in attendance a fixed crawl through tunnel was accessible along with a playhouse and kitchen area.

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 entrance door leading into the service was appropriately secured. Doorbells were provided at the two main entrance doors leading into the service, allowing parents and visitors to notify staff members of their arrival in order to facilitate entry to the premises if appropriate.
- The warm water temperature in the sanitary accommodation did not exceed the recommended maximum water temperature of 43°C which reduced the risk of scalding for the children.
- The kitchen was inaccessible to the children.
- Cleaning agents were stored safely out of the reach of children.
- Emergency exits were unobstructed.

Infection Control:

- The children were facilitated to wash their hands before eating, after using the toilet, after nappy changing and following messy play.
- Appropriate disposable gloves and aprons were available and observed being worn for each individual nappy change. The services nappy changing policy was observed being implemented when children were having their nappies changed during the inspection.
- Soothers were labelled and stored in personalised containers when not in use. Staff members clearly described appropriate procedures for the management of soothers, including washing the items in advance of sterilisation.
- The premises, play equipment and materials were in a clean and hygienic condition.

Administration of Medication:

- No child attending the service was observed having medication administered on the day of inspection.

Safe Sleep:

- When asked, staff members described safe sleep practices. Sleep checks were carried out and documented at 10 minutes intervals on all sleeping children during the inspection, noting each child's position, colour and breathing pattern. Based on a review of previous sleep logs maintained in the service, 10-minute sleep checks were carried out and recorded in this manner on a daily basis.

- The temperature in the sleep rooms was monitored and maintained within the safe sleep temperature range of 16 - 20°C.

Fire Safety:

- The records showed that fire drills were practiced on a monthly basis to familiarise both adults and children of the correct procedures to follow in the event of a fire.

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) A person who held in-date First Aid Response (FAR) training was at all times immediately available to the children attending the service.

(2)(a) The first aid boxes available in the service were suitably equipped and stored in conspicuous locations in each care room and in the service kitchen.

(b) The first aid supplies were available to the staff members at all times for the children attending the service.

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 was maintained of fire drills which had been completed in the service. The most recent fire drill was recorded as having taken place on the 17/07/2025.

(b) A record was kept of the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises. The fire extinguishers were certified as having been serviced in January 2025 and the smoke alarms were serviced on the 10/03/2025.

(4) Notices of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire were conspicuously displayed in the premises.