

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

<b>TUSLA Identifier:</b>	TU2015FL146
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<b>Name of Service:</b>	Links Childcare
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<b>Address of Service:</b>	Seabrook Manor, Station Road, Portmarnock, Co. Dublin
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<b>Eircode:</b>	D13 R9P7
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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(s) of Inspection:</b>	08/08/2024
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<b>No of pre-school children:</b>	AM	86	PM	85
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<b>Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:</b>	Early Years Inspectorate Child and Family Agency 180-189 Lakeshore Drive Airside Business Park Swords Co Dublin
<b>Inspection undertaken by:</b>	S. Cully & AM. Coyle
<b>Title:</b>	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).

<b>Conditions if applicable</b>	Not applicable.
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### Description of service

Links Childcare Seabrook Manor was established in 2006 and is one of the company's 13 privately owned Early Years services. The service provides full day, part time and sessional preschool care and education to children from 3 months to the time they commence attendance at primary school. School aged childcare care is provided to children up to the age of 12 years. The service is registered to operate from 7:30am to 6:30pm from Monday to Friday. The service operates from a purpose built two storey building in a residential setting in Portmarnock, Co. Dublin. There are 8 care rooms in the service. The Baby room and Wobbler rooms 1 and 2 are located on the ground floor and the Toddler room, Ash preschool room, Oak preschool room, Camp room and Elm preschool room are located on the first floor. On the day of inspection, the Elm preschool room was closed until the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) preschool programme resumes.

### Staffing

There are 31 staff members employed to work in Links Childcare Seabrook Manor. On the day of the inspection there were 24 adults present in the service including the service manager, area manager and 21 staff working directly with the children. The chef present on the day was hired via an agency. Eight staff members were on leave on the day of the inspection. The company's director of support services was present in the service in the afternoon to attend the inspection closing meeting.

### 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 and facilities. 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, 26 and 28. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

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, the area manager, the director of support services, 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 is the designated person in charge, and there is a named designated person in charge as required.

(b) The service manager was present and in charge of the service when the inspectors arrived unannounced at 09.20 am on the day of inspection and remained present on the premises for the duration of the inspection.

(2) Following a review of the staff roster, a total of 32 staff files were reviewed on the day of inspection. These files were in relation to the area manager, the service manager, twenty-eight staff who work directly with the children in the service and the services' chef. The file for the chef present on the day who was hired through an agency was also reviewed.

(2)(a)&(b) There were 2 written and validated references available for the 32 adults whose files were reviewed.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all staff members. The service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) International police vetting was available as required for 19 adults who had lived outside the State as adults for more than 6 consecutive months.

(4) Documentary evidence was available to demonstrate that the staff members who worked directly with the children in the early years service and required a childcare qualification held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 - 8 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) 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) During the inspection there were an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the service at all times.

(2) The adult to child ratios were correct in the service when the inspector arrived unannounced on the day of inspection. The following adult to child ratios were observed on the morning of the inspection:

- Baby room: There were 10 children aged between 1 year and 1 month and 1 year and 7 months being cared for by 3 adults.

- Wobbler 1 room: There were 12 children aged between 1 year and 5 months and 2 years being cared for by 3 adults.
- Wobbler 2 room: There were 15 children aged between 2 years and 1 month and 2 years and 9 months being cared for by 3 adults.
- Toddler room: There were 6 children aged between 2 years and 8 months and 3 years being cared for by 1 adult.
- Oak preschool room: There were 11 children aged between 3 years and 5 months and 4 years and 4 months being cared for by 2 adults.
- Ash preschool room: There were 15 children aged between 2 years and 10 months and 3 years and 8 months being cared for by 3 adults.
- Camp room: There were 17 children aged between 4 years and 6 months and 5 years and 5 months being cared for by 4 adults.
- Elm preschool room: closed

A member of staff who was a 'floating' staff member moved between the rooms on the ground floor to relieve staff for breaks. The service manager and area manager also provided support in care rooms when required.

(8)(a) Two 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 were made on how each child's learning, development and well-being was facilitated within the daily life of the service.

#### Basic needs:

- The service provides all snacks and meals to the children attending the service. For breakfast a selection of cereal and milk is available. During the inspection, the children were served a selection of mixed fruits for morning snack and beef tagine for dinner. In the baby room some children drank bottles of formula as part of their daily diet. These bottles are prepared by parents and then stored in the fridge on arrival to the service. Mealtimes were observed to be a relaxed and social occasion and children were given time to enjoy their food while also chatting to peers or staff. In the Baby room, younger children were sat in highchairs for mealtimes while others sat at the low tables and chairs. The staff sat with the children as they ate, observing them closely and supporting them as needed.
- In the Baby room, children's sleep needs were met as required. A staff member explained how some children needed rest twice a day and went down to sleep at 10am and 2pm, while others only needed to sleep once during the day and usually around 12pm. These children slept in the cots provided in the sleep room which was situated next to the care room. The children from Wobbler 1 room were also facilitated to sleep in the second cot room also located on the ground floor. In the Wobbler 2 and Toddler room children slept on sleep mats within the care room after dinner. In all care rooms there were spaces for rest or breaks from play.
- The children's nappies were changed promptly as required throughout the day and staff were noted to engage attentively with the children throughout the process. The children who were toilet trained were encouraged to use the toilet independently with support provided as needed.
- During the inspection, the children were observed to be comfortable and content within their environments and with the staff. Children called staff by name, invited staff to play with them and looked to them for comfort or reassurance.

- The staff team communicated well together and with management throughout the day to support smooth and consistent care provision to the children.

### **Supporting relationships around children:**

- During the inspection, staff were observed to use appropriate language, tones of voice and body language when interacting with or around the children. Staff made efforts to speak to children at their level, and in the Baby room the staff spent time on the floor with the children and were available for children to sit in their lap and provide hugs. This practice supports children to build trusting relationships with others.
- Family photographs were accessible to the children in the form of laminated and bound books. The children in the Baby room were observed taking the family book and spending time looking through the photographs. This practice supports children's wellbeing and helps them to develop a positive sense of identity and belonging.

### **Physical and material environment:**

- The care rooms were well resourced with a variety of materials and organised by identifiable interest areas such as home corners, construction areas, small world play, tabletop activity areas, sensory play materials and reading/cosy areas. This supports the children to engage in child-led play.
- There was age-appropriate furniture in each of the care rooms such as correct sized table, chairs or highchairs. The play materials were stored or displayed on low level shelving units. Appropriate furniture supports children's independence during their daily routine.
- There was a variety of sensory based activities freely available to the children throughout the morning such as, water play, sensory bins, natural materials and mixed media materials.
- An enclosed outdoor area to the rear of the service provided opportunity for movement and gross motor play. The area was surfaced with an all-weather safety surface, a plastic playhouse, wall mounted blackboard and ride on toys were provided for the children to play with. Children also brought toys from their care rooms to the outdoor area for activities, for example, a group of children were observed washing their toy animals in the water tray.

### 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 and internal doors of the service were appropriately secured to prevent the children from exiting unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the premises.
- A system of daily indoor and outdoor risk assessments was in place to identify and remove hazards or damaged equipment.
- Cleaning agents were stored safely on and out of reach of children.
- The kitchen was inaccessible to children on the day of inspection.
- The staircase was adequately lit, in good condition and suitable handrails were provided.
- Information relevant to the care of children's dietary requirements or allergies were on display in care rooms and clearly outlined child's condition, symptoms and emergency response plan.

##### Infection Control:

- Cleaning and disinfection schedules were on display and up to date throughout the service. The premises, furniture and equipment were in clean and hygiene conditions.
- Suitable disposable gloves and aprons were available and observed being used and disposed of by staff members after each individual nappy change. Pedal operated lidded nappy bins were provided for the disposal of nappies. This practice reduces the risk of cross-contamination.
- The adults and children were observed to wash their hands at appropriate times such as before meals, following outdoor play or following toileting and nappy changing.
- Thermostatically controlled running warm water, liquid soap and paper towels were provided at the wash hand basins in the sanitary accommodation of the service.

##### Administration of Medication:

- No children were observed having medication administered on the day of inspection.

##### Safe Sleep:

- Two designated sleep rooms were available on the ground floor. The sleep room next to the Baby room had 7 standard cots available, and 10 standard cots were available in the second sleep room across the hallway. Sleep mats were available and in use for sleeping children aged over 24 months.

- The temperature of both sleep rooms was monitored and recorded throughout the day and both were maintained within the adequate range of 18 - 22°C, as all sleeping children on the day were aged 12 months old and over.
- Staff were observed to carry out 10-minute physical sleep checks of sleeping children. Records of these sleep checks were maintained noting the child's position, colour and breathing pattern.

### Fire Safety:

- The designated emergency exit doors were clearly identifiable and unobstructed.

### Non-Compliance Information

#### Infection Control:

1. Two sleep mats which were stored and in use on the first floor had waterproof covers in need of repair or replacing. In areas of the mat covers, the waterproof material had worn/torn away leaving the internal foam exposed to contamination. This increases the risk of bacteria harbouring inside foam material therefore increasing the likelihood of cross contamination.
2. The cushions in the rest area in the Camp room were not maintained in a clean condition, some cushions were observed to be stained.

### Action submitted by the Registered Provider

#### Corrective Actions

##### Infection Control:

1. The two mats have been removed and disposed of safely. New sleeping mats were purchased.
2. The cushions were temporarily removed, and new cushions ordered.

#### Preventive Actions

1. Checking the mattresses will form part of the weekly review by the Manager, and staff have been asked to mention any such need for repair to the Manager as soon as it becomes obvious.
2. Checking the cushions will form part of the weekly review by the Manager and staff have been asked to notify the Manager immediately if they notice staining on any piece of furniture/equipment.

#### Supporting documentation submitted

##### Infection Control:

Photographic evidence of newly purchased sleep mats  
Documentary evidence of purchase of new cushions.

### Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliance under Regulation 23 has been adequately addressed by the registered provider.

### 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) Following review of staff files and the staff roster, it was evident that the registered provider ensured that there was a member of staff trained in First Aid Response (FAR) on the premises at all times.

(2)(a)&(b) Suitably equipped first aid boxes were available on the premises and these were stored in accessible and conspicuous locations out of the reach of children.

### 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. Based on the records maintained and as reported by staff members, fire drills were carried out monthly. The last recorded fire drill for the whole service took place on 15/07/2024.

(b) A record was kept of the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises. The firefighting equipment was certified as having been last serviced January 2024. The smoke detection system was certified as having been serviced on 09/01/2024.

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

## Part VI - Safety

### Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

#### Compliance Information

An insurance certificate was available to demonstrate the service was adequately insured. The service is currently insured to accommodate a maximum of 132 children attending on a full day care basis, with an expiry date 27/03/2025.