

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

<b>TUSLA Identifier:</b>	TU2015FL147
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<b>Name of Service:</b>	Links Childcare
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<b>Address of Service:</b>	Abington Woods, Kinsealy, Co. Dublin
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<b>Eircode:</b>	K36 WV32
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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 of Inspection:</b>	10 January 2023
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<b>No of pre-school children:</b>	AM	88	PM	70
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<b>Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:</b>	181-189 Lakeshore Drive, Airside Business Park, Swords, Co. Dublin
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<b>Inspection undertaken by:</b>	S Taaffe and AM Coyle
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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).

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

Links Childcare currently operates a total of 11 early years services in Dublin city and county. This service is registered to cater for a maximum of 110 pre-school children aged from 0-6 years. The service operates from 7.30am to 6.30pm each weekday whilst eligible children are facilitated to participate on the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme from 9.30am to 12.30pm daily, with an extra 30 minutes provided from 12.30 – 1.00pm for an additional fee. This service is conducted from a purpose-built premises which is located on the ground floor of an apartment block in a residential setting in Malahide in north Co. Dublin. Six care rooms and two separate sleep rooms are provided on the premises. Pre-school children aged from 3 months of age are accommodated in the service on a sessional, part-time and full day care basis up until they commence attendance in primary school. School-aged children up to 12 years of age are also accommodated in the service which operates for 51 weeks each year.

### Staffing

There were 30 adults present in the service on the day of inspection and, of these, 25 were working directly with the pre-school children, including a regional manager and the service manager who were coordinating the operational management of the service whilst providing support to the staff members. The full-time chef was engaged in cooking and catering duties. The company's director of support services was present for the closing meeting at the end of the inspection. The registered provider was not present in the service during 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. The inspections may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9, 11, 19, 21 and 23.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 9 – management and recruitment.

All care rooms were inspected.

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 staff, staff, children and regional manager 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 deputy manager was present and in charge of the service when the inspectors arrived unannounced to the service. The service manager arrived on the premises to commence her shift shortly afterwards, as planned and detailed on the staff roster.

Of the 29 staff members employed in the service, a sample of 14 staff files were reviewed. Based on previous inspection records and also on the starting date documented on each staff file, all 14 reviewed files related to staff members who commenced working in the service since the last inspection on 16/12/2020.

Documentation for the 14 staff was reviewed and the following was available:

(2)(a) &(b) Two written and appropriately validated references were available for the 14 staff members.

- (a) Twenty-six written references were from past employers.
- (b) Two written references were from sources other than a past employer.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures were available for the 14 staff members.
- (d) On review of the 14 sampled staff files, international police vetting was available as required for the 10 staff members who had resided outside of the Irish jurisdiction for more than 6 consecutive months as adults.
- (4) All 14 staff members whose files were reviewed work directly with children in the service and each held appropriate childcare qualifications 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 were 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 9.20am and remained so throughout the inspection.

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

- In the Baby room there were 6 children (one of whom was aged 11 months and 5 children who were aged between 1 year and 1 year 4 months, being cared for by 3 staff members). Additionally, from 10.00 – 11.00am a new baby aged 11 months was present in this room, settling into the service on their first day of attendance.
- In the Wobbler room there were 9 children who were aged between 1 years 5 months and 1 year 11 months being cared for by 4 staff members
- In the Toddler room there were 17 children aged between 2 years and 2 years 10 months being cared for by 5 staff members
- In Pre-school Oak there were 20 children aged 3 - 4 years, all attending on a part-time or full day care basis, being cared for by 3 staff members.
- In Pre-school Ash there were 18 children (of whom 3 children who were aged between 2 years 7 months and 2 years 11 months and 15 children who were aged 3 – 4 years), all attending on a part-time or full day care basis, being cared for by 3 staff members.
- In Pre-school Elm there were 17 children aged between 3 years 1 month and 4 years 5 months, all attending on a sessional ECCE or part-time basis being cared for by 2 staff members.

(8)(a) The registered provider ensured that 2 adults were present on the premises at all times, verified by staff rosters and staff attendance records maintained at 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 examples demonstrate how the children's learning, development and well-being was facilitated in the service during the inspection:

### Basic needs:

- The staff members were observed to be caring and attentive to the children and responded promptly when children showed signs of tiredness, being thirsty, needing to use the toilet and when the children showed an interest in or preference for a particular activity. Nappy changing occurred regularly and in a timely manner and staff were observed to engage with the children in a friendly and positive manner when changing their nappies.
- Individual child-led sleep routines were facilitated in the Baby room and the children were observed being placed in their cots and supported to settle to sleep when they showed signs of tiredness.
- The staff members were observed sitting and chatting with the children at their level at snack times and at mealtimes which promoted a relaxed atmosphere. Children who were able were encouraged to feed themselves and the staff members provided assistance when required. The children's water bottles were within their reach, provided with meals and available during the day for the children to take from low-level shelving should they feel thirsty at any stage. The children in the Baby room were held by staff members during bottle feeds.
- The children appeared confident and relaxed in their environment and were observed naturally forming small groups and engaging in a range of tabletop and floor play activities during the inspection.

### Supporting relationships around children:

- The staff members were observed to engage in respectful and supportive interactions with the children in their care, using warm tones of voice and addressing the children using their names. The children were observed to seek out staff for assistance and support when necessary. The staff members encouraged and supported the children in their play choices.
- One child was present in the Baby room for the first time for an hour-long period during the inspection, as part of the child's transition into the service. The staff members were observed using gentle and reassuring tones of voice, gently encouraging the child to explore the environment, and holding and soothing the child when they needed comforting.
- Staff members were observed calmly supporting children in finding positive solutions including sharing and turn-taking when the children experienced challenges while playing and interacting.
- A written record was kept in the Baby room and Wobbler room of meals, drinks, nappy changes, sleep times, activities and any other relevant information which was verbally passed on to parents when collecting their child at the end of the day.

### Physical and material environment:

- Each care room was equipped with a suitable range of furniture, play materials and equipment suitable to the children's ages and stages of development.
- Children were facilitated to rest on soft matting and cushions if they wished to rest or relax during the day, in a designated area in each of the care rooms.
- Outdoor play was facilitated for the children in all care rooms on the day of the inspection whenever the weather settled between intermittent rain showers. The children wore their coats, hats and gloves when outdoors.

### Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

#### Regulation 21 – Equipment and materials

*A registered provider shall ensure that there is adequate and suitable furniture, play and work equipment and materials available on the premises of the pre-school service.*

#### Compliance Information

The service was equipped with adequate and suitable furniture and play equipment and materials to meet the needs of the children as evidenced in the following examples:

- The Baby room provided ample space for children to lie, roll, sit, crawl and walk with a large section of the floor covered with foam-backed vinyl matting for comfort and safety. Push-along toys and stable props were available to support the learner walker, and shatter proof mirrors provided opportunities for the children to develop their visual senses. An adult's armchair was provided in the Baby room to allow adults working with the children to sit and feed, cradle or comfort the children.
- The care rooms were laid out in defined interest areas and were well-resourced with equipment and play materials including real, wooden and sensory materials, art and crafts materials, construction zones, shop areas, home corners, Montessori equipment and reading and relaxation areas which supported all areas of development.
- The play materials and equipment were positioned at an accessible level on open shelving which nurtured independence, facilitated choice and encouraged curiosity, spontaneous play and movement.

- A variety of multi-sensory experiences were provided in the care rooms including sand trays, water trays, pasta and rice trays and paint and brushes in pots at the easels.
- A suitable supply of books were provided and the children’s language development was facilitated in each room through conversation, story-telling and singing.
- There were family photographs on display in each care room. The family photographs in the Baby room were laminated and stored in booklet form. The staff members said that the children enjoyed holding and looking at the photos of themselves with their families, especially when they were new to the service and settling in.
- The outdoor play area which was located to the rear of the premises was subdivided by fencing into three separate spaces. Surfacing on the entire space consisted of an all-weather impact-absorbent material which facilitated children to engage in physical activity such as running, jumping, ball games and using the ride-on toys provided. A wooden climbing frame with steps, a ridged ramp, rope ladder, standing platforms and interconnecting tunnel and an attached slide provided play opportunities and supported the children’s gross motor development. A wooden outdoor kitchen was provided in another section which facilitated role play opportunities while a fixed basketball hoop and backboard was provided in the third section. A range of ride-on toys were provided in each section.

### 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 external doors, garden gates and fencing were secured to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the service and reduce the risk of a child leaving the service unsupervised.
- The warm water temperature in the sanitary accommodation, care rooms and at the two sinks in the outdoor play area did not exceed the recommended maximum water temperature of 43°C which reduced the risk of scalding for the children.
- Cleaning agents were stored safely on high shelving out of reach of children.

- The kitchen was inaccessible to the children during the inspection.
- The service's designated emergency exits were unobstructed.

### Infection Control:

- The premises, play materials and equipment were in a clean and hygienic condition. Up to date documented cleaning schedules were on display in the service.
- Soothers were individually labelled and stored in personalised containers in the Baby room and the Wobbler room when not in use.
- Thermostatically controlled warm water, liquid soap and paper hand towels were provided to support hand hygiene in the sanitary accommodation and in the care rooms. Hand sanitiser gel containing 70% alcohol was provided in the care rooms and corridors, out of the reach of children, to facilitate additional hand hygiene procedures to be undertaken.
- Suitable disposable gloves and aprons were available and observed being worn for each individual nappy changes.
- The children in the service were facilitated to wash their hands under staff supervision before eating, after using the toilet and nappy changing and following outdoor and messy play, with assistance provided when necessary.

### Administration of Medication:

- Medications were stored out of the reach of children.
- A sample of the administration of medications forms maintained for children who had received medication were reviewed and found to have been accurately completed, demonstrating safe practice. The forms included signed parental consent, evidence showing that a second staff member had checked and countersigned each dose of medication administered. Additionally, signatures had been obtained from the children's parent or guardian to document that they were aware if medication was administered to their child during the day and at what time.

### Safe Sleep:

- All children aged less than 2 years had access to and were observed sleeping in standard cots on the day of inspection.

- The inspectors observed that 10-minute sleep check observations noting the colour, position and breathing pattern of infants and children were being performed and documented on all sleeping children.
- Thermometers were provided in both sleep rooms and used to ensure the ambient air temperature was maintained within the recommended safe sleep temperature range of 16-20°C, as evidenced by the records maintained in the service and as described by staff members.

### Fire safety:

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

### Non-Compliance Information

#### Infection Control:

1. In discussions with the inspectors, some staff members did not demonstrate an awareness of the requirement to sterilise mouthed toys after use. It is acknowledged that the staff members appropriately described washing the mouthed toys in warm soapy water after use but this was not followed by sterilisation of the items to reduce the risk of cross-infection.
2. Bottles of infant formula were not refrigerated promptly when brought by the parents to the service. Two bottles of infant formula were observed sitting on the worktop in the Baby room at 10.00am, in order “to cool” before being placed in the fridge, according to a staff member. However, these same two prepared full bottles were subsequently observed in the same position out of the fridge at 11.10am. This increased the risk of bacteria multiplying to levels in the formula which could result in growth of food poisoning bacteria.

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

#### Corrective Actions:

#### Infection Control:

1. It is regrettable that the staff member asked to describe the procedure for mouthed toys in the Baby room did not provide an adequate response on the day of the inspection. Links Childcare follow the guidelines set out in the HSPC guidelines. Retraining on the cleaning schedule has been done with the staff member in question and the topic has been included on the agenda for the crèche monthly staff CPD.

2. On the day on the inspection, a parent was in breach of the Links Childcare Infant Formula Policy which has been circulated to all parents/guardians. The formula was brought to the crèche at a boiling temperature rather than cooled as per steps 1,2 and 3 of the policy. Notwithstanding this, it is accepted that the bottle should have been refrigerated as soon as it was safe to do so. On foot of the inspector's comments an email was sent to all parents, the following day, to remind them to ensure that the bottle is at a temperature, on arrival, where it can be immediately stored in the fridge as per step 4 of the policy. The staff in the Baby room have been retrained to ensure that this does not happen again.

### **Preventive Actions:**

1. The manager will monitor the implementation and understanding of this protocol going forward.
2. It is hoped that the email to parents will serve as a preventative action, coupled with ongoing monitoring by the manager.

### **Supporting documentation submitted**

Documentary evidence was submitted, including a copy of the service's infant formula policy, the service's cleaning schedules, and a copy of the email sent to parents in relation to infant formula.

### **Summary Comment**

The non-compliances identified under this Regulation on inspection have been adequately addressed.