

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015FL147
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Name of Service:	Links Childcare
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Address of Service:	Abington Woods, Swords Road, Malahide, Co. Dublin
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Eircode:	K36 WV32
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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:	27/05/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	82	PM	72
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate 180-189 Lakeshore Drive, Airside Business Park, Swords, Co Dublin.
Inspection undertaken by:	N McEndoo and E Saini
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).

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Description of service

Links Childcare is one of multiple services privately-owned and operated by the registered provider. This service operates as a full day care, part-time and sessional service and caters for children from 0-6 years. The service operates from 7.30am to 6.30pm each weekday and participates in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme from 9.30am to 12.30pm daily for 38 weeks of the year. The premises is purpose-built and is located on the ground floor of an apartment block in a residential setting in Malahide north county Dublin. The service consists of 7 care rooms, 1 sleep room, a kitchen and a communal area used as an additional dining and play area. An enclosed outdoor area is located to the rear of the premises.

Staffing

There is a service manager, deputy manager and an assistant manager employed in the service to coordinate the day-to-day operational management of the service. In total there is a staff team of 27 staff members. There is a chef employed to work in a catering capacity. The registered provider does not work in the service.

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 and safety. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

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The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9, 11, 15, 16, 19, and 21. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under Regulation 15 – Record of pre-school child and Regulation 16 – Record in relation to pre-school service.

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, 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*
- (c) there is a clear management structure in the service that identifies the lines of authority and accountability in the service and the specific roles and responsibilities of each employee and unpaid worker.*

(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

(1)

The registered provider ensured that.

- (a) There was a designated person in charge and a named adult to deputise in their absence.
- (b) The designated person in charge was available on the premises throughout the period of inspection.

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(c) There was a clear management structure in the service that identifies the lines of authority and accountability in the service and the specific roles and responsibilities of each employee.

(2)

On the day of inspection, 20 adults were present, the centre manager, the person in charge, the chef, 17 adults who were employed to work directly with the children.

The following vetting information was available for 27 adults:

- (a) Thirty-six written validated references from past employers for 23 of the adults.
- (b) Eighteen written validated references from reputable sources for 14 of the adults.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for 27 staff. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
- (d) Police vetting from the police authorities in another state was available for 23 adults who had lived outside the state for a period of six consecutive months or more.

(3)

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

(4)

Twenty-five of the adult files reviewed, evidenced they held a major award at level 5 or above in early childhood care and education on the national qualification framework, or qualifications deemed by the Department of Children, Disability and Equality (DCDE) to meet the regulatory requirement.

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.

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(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)

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 82 children present in the service being supervised by 17 adults during the inspection.

(8)

(a) The registered provider ensured that there were always at least two adults on the premises when children were present in the service.

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;

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(i) written parental consent for appropriate medical treatment of the child in the event of an emergency.

(3) A record in writing referred to in paragraph (1) or (2) shall be open to inspection on the premises by-

(a) a parent or guardian of a pre-school child but only in respect of the record relating to that child,

(b) an employee who is authorised in that behalf by the registered provider, and

(c) an authorised person.

Compliance Information

(1)

(a)-(i) A sample of eleven children's files reviewed demonstrated that records were maintained appropriately, including:

- Name and date of birth of the child.
- Date the child first attended the service.
- Parent or guardian contact information.
- Authorisation for collection.
- Relevant medical and allergy information.
- Registered medical practitioner details.
- Immunisation information where available.
- Written parental consent for emergency medical treatment.

(3) On the day of inspection, a record in writing in respect of each pre-school child was available and open to inspection on the premises by-

(c) an authorised person.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 16 – Record in relation to pre-school service

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of the following information in relation to the service:

(i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;

(k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.

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(3) A record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection on the premises, and the documents and records referred to in paragraph (2)(a) shall be open to inspection whether on the premises or elsewhere, by an authorised person.

Compliance Information

(1)

(i) Records pertaining to a staff roster were held for adults working within the service.

(k) On the day of inspection, a sample of 26 accident and incident records were reviewed that had occurred since the last inspection. The records were found to be comprehensive and contained the required information, including parental acknowledgement of the notification.

(3)

On the day of inspection, a record in writing in respect of documents relating to paragraph (1)(i) and (k) listed above were available and open to inspection on the premises by an authorised person.

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

(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

(1)(a)(b) The following observations are examples of how each child's learning, development and well-being with appropriate and suitable care practices were facilitated within the service.

Basic needs:

- The service promoted healthy eating and food and snacks were provided at regular intervals during the day. The main meal of the day consisted of beef stroganoff, with extra portions if required. Younger children were supported when eating and had the opportunity to feed themselves appropriate to the age and stage of their development. Drinking water was available to the children throughout the day, should they feel thirsty at any point.

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- Appropriate arrangements were in place for nappy changing and toileting. Practice observed on inspection demonstrated respectful interactions, adequate supervision and hygienic procedures that supported the welfare of the children.
- Younger children were observed to be free to move around their care rooms at their own pace and engage themselves in play activities of their own choosing. The older children's rooms had easy access to the outside area throughout the day, and children were observed to move between both indoors and outdoors with adult supervision.
- The individual sleep needs of younger children were met, and this was observed on the day by children sleeping at various intervals. Older pre-school children were facilitated with a scheduled rest period in the afternoon.

Supporting relationships around children

- Adults were observed to demonstrate respectful interactions, that were warm, reassuring and supportive to the children.
- Positive parental communication was observed at collection times, with detailed handover information given where required.
- The staff members were observed to work well as a team, frequently collaborating and communicating with each other in relation to activities, transitions, and children's needs.

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

Each care room had a sufficient amount of equipment and materials that were age and stage appropriate for the children in attendance. Materials available were observed to be durable and well maintained. The toys and materials were varied and readily accessible on low level shelving throughout the service.

There were clearly defined areas such as a home corner, rest area and construction area. Children could access arts and crafts materials as and when they needed. Sensory and messy play was facilitated with tuff trays within the care rooms. In the older rooms there was a range of Montessori materials available to the children throughout the day. Appropriate quiet rest areas with soft flooring, cushions and storybooks were available in each care room and children were observed spending time in this area for short periods of rest throughout the day.

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Furniture within each care was appropriate to the stage of development for the age group present, such highchairs for younger children and tables and chairs for the older ones. Appropriate cots, floor beds and bedding was also available to the children, appropriate to the age and stage of their development.

A large outdoor area with impact absorbing artificial grass was available to the rear of the premises which facilitated children to engage in energetic play such as running and use of ride on toys. There was a wooden structure present to support climbing and imaginary play. Sensory play in the form of water painting was also available outdoors. Materials from the classrooms were also supplied from the classrooms as additional materials such as paper and crayons, magnets and paint brush with water.