

TUSLA PRE- REGISTRATION REGULATORY INSPECTION REPORT

Inspection Due to a Proposed Change of Circumstances

Tusla I.D.:	TU2015FL148
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Name of Service	Links Childcare
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Address of Service:	Castleland Park, Balbriggan, Co. Dublin K32 CH79
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Email Address:	gillian@linkschildcare.ie
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Name of Registered Provider:	Deirdre Kelly
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Type of Proposed Service:	Full Day Care	✓	Part-Time	✓	Sessional	✓
	Drop-In		Childminding		Temporary	

Proposed change:	Change in number of children that can be accommodated from 115 to 145. Change in number of staff from 22 to 24.
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Proposed Number of Children:	145
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Recommended Change Following Inspection:	A maximum of 138 children can be accommodated where children are attending on a sessional and full day basis. (119 children if all children are attending on a FDC basis). Clear floor space for each care room has been outlined under Regulation 30.
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Registered change:	Change in Number of Children from 115 to 138 (Max 119 Full Day/Part-Time) children Change in Number of Staff from 22 to 24 staff
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Date of Inspection:	2	6	0	8	2	0	2	4
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Inspection undertaken by:	AM Coyle & S Taaffe
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Title:	Early Years Inspector
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Tusla Early Years Inspectorate Address:	181-189 Lakeshore Drive,
	Airside Business Park, Swords, Co. Dublin K67 Y5C6.

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Rationale for Inspection:

Proposed Change of Circumstance

Note: For Office use only, to be completed by Registration Office

Registration Status:	Registered for Full Day, Part Time & Sessional Service for a maximum 138 (Max 119 Full Day/Part-Time) children
Date of Registration	11th September 2024

Authority to Inspect

The Tusla Early Years Inspectorate carries out inspections of Early Years Services under Section 58(D) of the Child Care Act 1991 (as inserted by Section 92 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013).

Description of Service	Links Childcare currently operates a total of 13 early years services in Dublin city and county. Links childcare Balbriggan is registered to provide care to children aged 0-1 year on a sessional, part-time and full day care basis and also provides care to school aged children. The service operates from 7.30am to 6.30pm each weekday, eligible children are facilitated to participate on the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme from 9.30am to 12.30pm daily.
Premises	Links Childcare is conducted from a purpose built 2 storey building in a residential area of Balbriggan, north Co Dublin. There are 6 care rooms in the service namely the Baby room, the Wobbler room, the Toddler room, the preschool Ash room and the preschool Elm room all located on the ground floor with the preschool room Oak located on the first floor. The proposed new Senior toddler room is located on the ground floor of the service.
Staffing	The service employs 24 staff members including the service manager who coordinates the day-to-day operational management of the service and a full-time chef. The regional manager was present in the service throughout the inspection and provided assistance across all care rooms as required. The company's director of operations was present for the closing meeting at the conclusion of the inspection. The registered provider was not present in the service during the inspection.
Methodology	<p>The inspection was an announced inspection to assess compliance with the Childcare Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 and Childcare Act 1991 (Early Years Services) (Amendment) Regulations 2016. The Inspection focused on regulations under the following themes; Governance, Health, Welfare and Development of the child, Safety and Premises.</p> <p>The findings on inspection based on information obtained through examination of documentation, direct observation, and discussion with relevant staff are documented in the inspection report and taken into consideration when making a decision in relation to registering the change in circumstance. 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.</p>

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Acknowledgements	The Inspectors wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the director of operations, regional manager, person in charge, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.
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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.

Requirement met:	The requirement has been met. The service has designated person in charge and a named deputy.
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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.

Requirement met:	The requirement has been met. (1) The registered provider is aware of the minimum ratio of adults to children specified in Part 2 of Schedule 6 and would ensure that an adequate number of adults would at all times work directly with the children in the service.
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Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 20 - Facilities for Rest and Play

(1) Subject to this Regulation, a registered provider shall ensure that—

(a) having regard to the number of pre-school children attending the service, their respective ages and the amount of time they spend on the premises, there are adequate and suitable facilities for each child to play indoors and, where required by these Regulations, outdoors, during the day, and

(b) there are adequate and suitable facilities for a pre-school child to rest during the day, and in the case of an overnight pre-school service, during the day and the night.

(3) A registered provider of a full day care service, a part-time day care service or a childminding service, other than such a service to which paragraph (2) applies, shall ensure that—

(a) a suitable, safe and secure outdoor space to which the pre-school children attending the service have access on a daily basis is provided on the premises or

Requirement met:	The requirement has been met. (1)(a) The care rooms including the proposed new Senior Toddler room were resourced with a broad range of suitable play materials and equipment to facilitate children to initiate and sustain meaningful play activities. Interest areas were clearly defined and included well-resourced home corners, libraries, construction areas, a
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wide range of tabletop materials, sensory play materials including sand trays and arts and crafts areas. The play materials were stored at an accessible level to the pre-school children. A secure outdoor area is located to the rear of the service.

(b) A sleep room containing 9 standard cots is provided in the sleep room adjacent to the Baby room on the ground floor. The proposed registered provider is aware of national safe sleep best practice guidelines. Twelve cocoon beds area available for children aged 15 months and older to sleep in along with floor mats for pre-school children aged 2 years and older who would require or wish to sleep or rest in the service. A rest area is available in all the care rooms with soft matting and cushions provided close to the libraries to enable a child to rest and take a break from activities throughout the day if required.

(3)(a) An outdoor area is located to the rear of the service, the area is covered with a safety surface. Equipment provided including a large climbing frame with steps, a rope ladder, wooden steps, a climb through tunnel and a slide all available on the climbing frame. Ride-on toys, a playhouse and an outdoor kitchen are provided for the children to play with.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 22 – Food and Drink

A registered provider shall ensure that adequate and suitable, nutritious and varied food and drink is available for each pre-school child attending the pre-school service.

Requirement met:

The requirement has been met.
A chef is employed to prepare and cook all meals and snacks for children attending on a full day care and part time basis. A 4-week menu is available. Drinking water was made available to the children in all the care rooms throughout the day. Fridges are available in the care rooms for the storage of perishable items including food items and formula milk which the children may bring with them from home

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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.

Requirement met:

The requirement has been met.

There are no hazards observed by the inspectors that would impact the health, safety or welfare of the children attending the service. Appropriate measures have been undertaken in the service to ensure the safety of the children.

- The external doors, windows and side gate were appropriately secured to prevent children from exiting the service unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the service.
- The windows in the care rooms were fitted with restrictive opening devices.
- Blind cords were secure in all of the care rooms.
- Suitable handrails are provided on the staircases. The staircases are also adequately lit, and the floor covering is in good condition.
- All furniture and equipment were clean and in good condition and suitable for use by the proposed age groups.
- The heating system for the service was thermostatically controlled to prevent radiators from exceeding the maximum surface temperature of 50°C.
- Thermostatically controlled running water was available at the wash hand basins in the service.

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—*
- is safely stored in an easily accessible and conspicuous position on the premises, and*
 - is available to the children attending the pre-school service at all times.*

Requirement met:

The requirement has been met.

(1) There are three staff members in the service who hold in-date first aid response (FAR) training.

(2)(a)(b) First aid boxes were suitably equipped and stored in readily accessible and conspicuous positions in the care rooms, available at all times for the children if necessary.

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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.

Requirement met:

The requirement has been met.

(1)(a) A copy of the monthly fire drills was available in the service. The last fire drill occurred in the service on the 21/08/24.

(b) A record is maintained of the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment and smoke detection system in the service. The firefighting equipment was certified as having been serviced in January 2024 and the fire detection and alarm system on the 21/06/24.

(4) Notices of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire are displayed in the service.

Part VI – Safety

Regulation 28 – Insurance

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

Requirement met:

The requirement has been met. An insurance certificate confirming insurance for 145 children attending the service at any one time up until 27/03/2025 was available.

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Part VII – Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 – Premises

A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are—

- (a) of sound and stable structure,
- (b) safe and secure,
- (c) kept adequately lit, heated and ventilated,
- (d) cleaned, maintained and repaired, as required, and
- (e) equipped with adequate and suitable sanitary facilities.

Requirement met:

(a) The premises is a recently constructed purpose-built childcare facility which appears to be in good condition throughout.

(b) The premises was safe and was found to be appropriately secured to prevent the children from exiting unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the early years' service. Staff access the building via a fingerprint mechanism and parents access the building via a call bell. Each care room and the kitchen have an internal phone in place to support communication and facilitate staff members to summon assistance if required.

(c) All the care rooms in the service have windows which provides the rooms with natural light. The natural light can be augmented with artificial ceiling lighting as required. Appropriate shatter proof coverings are provided on the ceiling lighting. The temperature of the care rooms was 20°C on the day of inspection. There are sufficient windows provided in all of the care room to achieve adequate ventilation. Mechanical ventilation is available throughout the sanitary facilities. The service is heated by gas fired central heating.

(d) The service was in a clean condition on the day of inspection. Cleaning schedules are available.

(e) The additional sanitary facilities in the service to facilitate the children attending the Senior toddler room are located directly off the main hallway and comprise of the following:

- One toilet, 2 nappy changing mats, 2 wash hand basins for the children and a wash hand basin to facilitate the staff washing their hands.

Warm water not exceeding 43 °C, liquid soap and paper towels are provided at all the wash hand basins in the service.

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Part VII – Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 30 – Minimum Space Requirements

- (1) Subject to paragraphs (2) to (6), a registered provider shall ensure that adequate clear floor space is available in the premises for the work, play and movement of children attending the pre-school service.
- (2) A registered provider of a full day care service or a part-time day care service shall ensure that the minimum amount of clear floor space specified in column (3) of Schedule 7 opposite a particular reference number specified in column (1) of that Schedule in respect of the age range of children specified in column (2) thereof at that reference number is available for each child in that age range attending the service.

Requirement met:

- (1) The minimum space regulatory requirement can be met for 138 pre-school where children are attending on a sessional and full day basis. The registered provider is aware of the minimum clear floor space requirements per child as specified in Schedule 7.
- (2)
Adequate clear floor space is available in each of the existing 6 care rooms and the new care room as outlined below.
- The clear floor space in the Baby room measured 42 square metres which meets the space requirements for 12 pre-school children aged 0-1 years or 15 pre-school children aged 1-2 years attending on a part-time or on a full day care basis.
 - The clear floor space in the Wobbler room measured 43 square metres which meets the space requirements for 15 pre-school children aged 1-2 years or 18 preschool aged 2-3 years attending on a part-time or on a full day care basis.
 - The clear floor space in the Toddler room measured 43 square metres which meets the space requirements for the proposed 18 pre-school children aged 2-3 years attending on a part-time or on a full day care basis.
 - The clear floor space in the Pre-school room Ash measured 46.24 square metres which meets the space requirements for 19 pre-school children aged 2-3years or 20 children aged 3-6 years attending on a part-time or on a full day care basis, or 25 children attending on a sessional basis.
 - The clear floor space in the Pre-school Room Elm measured 41.7 square metres which meets the space requirements for 17 pre-school children aged 2-3 years or 18 children aged 3-6 years attending on a part-time or on a full day care basis, or 23 children attending on a sessional basis.
 - The clear floor space in the Pre-school Room Oak measured 47.5 square metres which meets the space requirements for 20 pre-school children aged 3-6 years attending on a part-time or on a full day care basis, or 26 children attending on a sessional basis.
 - The clear floor space in the new Senior Toddler room measured 23 square metres which meets the space requirements for 10 pre-school children aged 2-3 years attending on a part-time or on a full day care basis, or 13 children attending on a sessional basis.