

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015FL149			
Name of Service:	Links Childcare			
Address of Service:	Station Road, Portmarnock, Co. Dublin			
Eircode:	D13 A212			
Name of Registered Provider:	Gillian Kelly			
Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional			
Date of Inspection:	24/09/2025			
No of pre-school children:	AM	64	PM	50
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Child and Family Agency, Unit 4&5 Nexus Building, Block 6A, Blanchardstown Corporate Park, Dublin 15			
Inspection undertaken by:	E Hosford and Á Dunne			
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

Links Childcare Portmarnock is 1 of 14 early years services operated by the registered provider and caters for children from birth to 6 years on a sessional, part-time and full day care basis. The service operates from 7.30am to 6.30pm Monday to Friday and offers a service to school age children. The service is conducted from a purpose built 2 storeys building in a residential area in north Co Dublin and has 6 care rooms. On the ground are the Jelly Fish room for 0-2 years old, the Octopus room for 1–2-year-olds and the Dolphin room for 1–3-year-olds. On the first floor are the Starfish room for 2–4-year-olds, Sea Turtles room for 3-4 years old and the Sea Horse room for 2–4-year-olds in the morning and school age children in the afternoon. A downstairs hallway known as activity street is available for mealtimes and an outdoor area is available to the rear of the service.

Staffing

The registered provider employs 18 staff to work directly in the service to include the person in charge, deputy person in charge, a cook and 15 childcare staff. The regional manager was available during the inspection and for the feedback 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 and 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 9,11,15,16,19 and 23. However, on inspection an additional non-compliance which posed a risk was identified under Regulation 29. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 15,16,19 and 23.

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 regional manager, 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

(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

(2) The files of 12 new staff members employed in the service since the last inspection were reviewed. Garda vetting disclosures for all staff were also reviewed.

The registered provider had completed the following checks:

(a) Eleven validated written references were available from a past employer.

(b) Thirteen validated written references were available from a source other than a past employer.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for 18 staff members employed in the service along with the regional manager. The service adhered to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years for all staff employed.

(d) Documentary evidence was available to demonstrate that police vetting was available from 13 countries in respect of 12 new employees who had lived outside of the state for six months or more as adults.

(4) Twelve staff members had documentary evidence of at least a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 or above on the National Framework of Qualifications or a qualification deemed eligible by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth Affairs

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 11 - Staffing levels

(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

(2) During the inspection there were 15 adults working directly with 64 children aged between 1 to 6 years in the morning and 12 adults working with 50 children in the afternoon.

- Jelly Fish room: 2 adults working with 4 children aged from 1-2 years of age in the morning and 1 staff with 4 children in the afternoon.
- Octopus room: 3 adults working with 10 children aged from 1-2 years of age in the morning and afternoon.
- Dolphin room: 3 adults working with 9 children aged from 1-3 years of age in the morning and afternoon.
- Star Fish room: 3 adults working with 19 children aged from 2-4 years of age in the morning and 4 adults working with 19 children in the afternoon.
- Sea Turtles room: 1 adult working with 8 children aged from 3-4 years of age in the morning and in the afternoon.
- Sea Horse room: 3 adults working with 14 children aged from 2-4 years of age in the morning

(8)(a) On review of the service roster and on discussion with staff two adults were on the premises during the operation of 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;*
- (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-
(c) an authorised person.

Compliance Information

(1) The records maintained for a sample of 12 children attending the service were inspected and all were found to be appropriately completed with the required information as specified in sub-sections (a) to (i) in this regulation.

(3)(c) The children's records were open to inspection as requested by the inspector as 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:

- (h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis;*
- (i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;*
- (j) details of any medication administered to a pre-school child attending the service with signed parental consent;*
- (k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.*

(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

- (h) On review of the documentation available in the care rooms each children's arrival and departure was accurately reflected in a daily record book which was maintained by staff. This assisted in the safe evacuation of children in the event of an emergency.
- (i) A service roster was available, and it demonstrated the staff present in the service and their contracted working hours.
- (j) Details of 38 medication administered records were reviewed and the required information was recorded.
- (j) Details of 29 accident and incident records were reviewed, and the required information was recorded.
- (3) The required records were available to the inspectors during the inspection.

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)

Basic Needs:

- The staff members were observed to be kind and attentive in their interactions with the children and the atmosphere in the service was warm and child centred. Transitions between activities such as outdoor play to mealtimes were managed by staff in a relaxed and organised manner.
- Healthy eating was promoted within the service with staff working with parents and children to encourage healthy meals were eaten. Meals were served at regular intervals with additional food made available to the children if required. Drinking water was freely available to the children throughout the session. The staff members sat with the children at mealtimes encouraging conversations and extending interactions.
- Nappy changing was completed at set times and when required for younger children and older children were observed using the toilet under supervision, with assistance provided by the staff member when necessary.
- Children were observed moving freely within the care rooms and taking a break from activities and relaxing in a rest area in the care room which was equipped with soft matting, cushions and child sized chairs.

Physical and material environment:

- The care rooms were well resourced with an extensive range and quantity of equipment, toys and materials to support the children's independent thinking and extend their learning and natural curiosity.
- All equipment and materials in the care room were appropriate to the age and development of the children. The furniture provided in the room was low level and age appropriate with toys and play materials accessible.

- An outdoor area was available to the rear of the service and was equipped with a sheltered area with covered sand trays, bikes, and cars. A grass area was provided to enable the children to run and play games.

Supporting relationships:

- Staff were observed working well together in supporting the children and transitioning from activities such as outdoor play and snack time.
- Staff maintained daily records of each child's meals, sleeps, activities undertaken and nappy changes, these were shared with parents at collection.
- The children were encouraged to share and take turns and assist their friends if needed during the day.

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 main service entrance door leading into the premises was appropriately secured with a digital keypad system to prevent the children from exiting unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the early years' service.
- Cleaning agents, blind cords, garden equipment and flexes were stored safely out of the reach of children.
- The kitchen was inaccessible to the children during the inspection

Infection Control:

- Liquid soap and paper hand towels were provided to support hand hygiene in the sanitary accommodation in the service. The children in the care rooms were facilitated to wash their hands after outdoor play, using the toilet and before meals. Pedal bins were provided for the disposal of wastepaper in the sanitary facility.
- Soothers were labelled and stored in personalised containers when not in use.
- The premises, play equipment and materials were in a clean and hygienic condition.
- Individual storage bags were available for the storage of sheets used by the children during sleep time.

- Mattresses in use were in good condition, and all had washable wipeable covers allowing for easy cleaning. Cots and low beds at sleep time were observed to be positioned with a minimum of 50 cm apart at sleep time
- Nappy changing was completed as per service policy and procedure.

Administration of Medication:

- Records were available to demonstrate the administration of medication to children while they attended the service.

Safe Sleep:

- Children under the age of two years were facilitated to sleep in cots.
- Staff members completed 10-minute sleep checks to include each child's colour, breathing and position.
- Shoes and outer clothing such as shoes, tops and trousers were removed from children while they slept.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. Thermostatically controlled water was not available in the sanitary facilities used by the children in the Star Fish room. The temperature of the water was recorded as 48.3 ° C at 10.58am and 47.1 ° C at 1pm. This exceeded the recommended maximum temperature of 43 ° C and increased the potential risk of scalding a child.
2. A gate in the outdoor area used by the children in the Jelly Fish room was observed to be damaged and contained splinters of wood. This created a potential risk of injury to a child.
3. Glass doors on the ground floor of the service leading to the outdoor area were not fitted with visibility strips to ensure the safety of children in the service. This increased the potential risk of a child walking into the glass and injuring themselves.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. In response to the non-compliance the registered provider has stated that the service has engaged with a plumbing company regarding the issue and this has now been rectified. Staff have been retrained to check water temperatures.
2. In response the service has stated that the outdoor gate has been repaired. The maintenance team have been instructed to check gates weekly.

3. To address the non-compliance visibility strips have been re-applied to the glass doors on the ground floor leading out to the outdoor area. Staff will regularly monitor the visibility strips, which will be reapplied by management as needed.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

1. Documentary evidence.
2. Photographic evidence.
3. Photographic evidence.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliances identified under regulation 23 have been addressed.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-
(c) kept adequately lit, heated and ventilated

Non-Compliance Information

(c) The temperature of the Jelly Fish room, Star Fish, Sea Horse room and Sea Turtle room were not maintained between the recommended temperature of 18-22° C, while children played. It is acknowledged that staff did open windows within the rooms following discussion with the inspectors. The temperatures were recorded as.

- Jelly Fish room 24° C at 12pm and 23.3° C at 12.15pm
- Star Fish room 23.9° C at 11.39am,
- Sea Horse room 24.3° C at 11.38am
- Sea Turtle room Cot room 24.2° C at 11.29am

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(c) In response the service has stated that they have engaged with their plumbers, and the heating system timings have been readjusted. The room temperatures in the rooms have been checked, and they have not gone above the recommended temperatures of 18-22° C. Heating system timings adjusted accordingly.

Supporting documentation submitted

(c) Documentary evidence of daily/weekly audit template.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified under regulation 29(c) has been addressed