

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015FL150
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Name of Service:	Links Childcare
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Address of Service:	Latchford Place, Clonee, Dublin 15.
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Eircode:	D15 HD63
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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:	29/04/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	84	PM	78
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Floor 7 Brunel Building, Heuston South Quarter, St John's Road West, Kilmainham, Dublin 8 D08 X01F
Inspection undertaken by:	E. Griffin, L. Jameson and G. Kavanagh
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
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Description of service

Links Childcare is one of 14 services operated by the registered provider and is located in a two-story purpose-built premises in a residential area of Dublin 15. The service is registered to provide early childhood care and education to a maximum of 109 children aged 0 to 6 years old, Monday to Friday. The service operates an Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme sessional service from 9.30am to 12.30am, with an optional additional half hour available. The service has six care rooms. On the ground floor there is the Jellyfish Room (1 to 2 years old), Octopus Room (18 to 30 months old) and Sea Turtle room (2 ½ to 4 years old). There are sanitary facilities located off each of the care rooms, and a cot room located off the Jellyfish Room. There is also a staff toilet, a kitchen and a reception area located on this floor. Facilities on the first floor include the Dolphin room (2 to 3 years old), Starfish room (3-4 years old) and Seahorse room (3-5 years old). Further sanitary facilities for staff and children and a staff room are available on this floor. A fully enclosed outdoor play area is located to the rear of the premises.

Staffing

There are currently 32 adults employed by the service including the Director of Support Services, one regional manager, the person in charge, deputy person in charge, an assistant manager, a chef, and 26 childcare staff two of whom were employed under the access and inclusion model. There were 21 adults present throughout the day of the inspection, including one regional manager, the person in charge, deputy person in charge, assistant manager and 17 childcare staff. In addition, there was one student on work experience supporting the children in the care rooms in a supernumerary capacity. The registered provider was not present on the day of the inspection and does not work in the service. During the inspection a regional manager and the director of support services from another area arrived and remained on site to help facilitate the inspection process.

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.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under Record of a Preschool Child Regulation 15 (1)(a-i) and (3)(c), Record in Relation to Preschool Service Regulation 16 (k) and (3), Regulation 19 Health, Welfare and Development of child, and Regulation 23 Safeguarding Health, Safety and Welfare of Child.

As a result, the scope of the inspection included the Jellyfish room, the Octopus room and the Seahorse room.

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 management team, staff, student 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)
- (a) The service had a designated person in charge and named person to deputise as required.
 - (b) A review of the roster showed either the person in charge or the deputy person in charge were rostered to be present during the operational hours of the service.
 - (c) There was a clear management structure in place, and staff reported being aware of this.

(2) A review of paperwork and conversation with the person in charge confirmed there are currently 32 adults employed by the registered provider to work in the service. The files of 14 adults were reviewed as part of the inspection process five of whom were new to the service since the last inspection.

The registered provider had completed the following checks:

- (a) There were 16 written and validated references available from past employers.
 - (b) There were 12 written and validated references available from a source other than a past employer.
 - (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all 14 adults. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
 - (d) Police vetting was available for 9 adults who had lived in a country other than Ireland for a period of six months or more as an adult.
- (3) Evidence was available to demonstrate that the procedures specified in paragraph (2) were carried out in relation to 14 adults before employment commenced.
- (4) There was documentary evidence available that the 11 adults who worked directly with children attending the service held a qualification deemed eligible by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth Affairs.

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.*

Compliance Information

- (1) The registered provider ensured the following:
- There were 17 staff available and caring for 84 children present on the morning of the inspection and there were 17 staff available and caring for 78 children present on the afternoon of the inspection. In addition, the two regional managers, the person in charge, deputy person in charge, assistant manager were all available to provide support and assistance in the care rooms as required.

- (2) The adult child ratios were correct when the inspectors arrived unannounced to the service and throughout the inspection. Staff were aware of the required ratios for the age range of children in the rooms.

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) A sample of 25 children's registration records were reviewed as part of the inspection. The registered provider ensured that the information required under (a)-(i) was maintained for each child.
- (3) (c) Records were open to inspection by an authorised person. All records requested by the inspection team were available for review.

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:

(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

(1) (k) A sample of 25 accident and incident records were reviewed as part of the inspection. The registered provider ensured that all the required information was filled out correctly.

(3) Records were open to inspection by an authorised person. All records requested by the inspection team were available for review.

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

Basic Needs:

- At morning snack time children were observed to be offered a selection of fruit sliced up into small pieces. The service also provided a hot meal option for children which was prepared on site, for example, at dinnertime chicken, potatoes and carrot was served at 11.30am. There was an alternative food option of pasta available, and extra food was available if required.
- Water was available and accessible in each care room for the children to drink.
- Lighting was subdued in the sleep rooms and soft music was played during sleep time.

- There were cosy areas with a soft mat, cushions, cuddly toys and books for rest and relaxation present in each care rooms. In addition, there was an adult sized armchair in the Jellyfish room which was observed in use when a child needed comforting.
- There was a sense of belonging for children in the service. Evidenced by the following, there was a 'Family Wall' display, a 'Birthday Time' display, and the children's artwork was displayed throughout the care rooms in the service. In addition, children had their own cubby holes to store items and coat hooks labelled with their name.
- Each room had a garden timetable, and all children were observed to play in this area during the inspection. This supported their social, cognitive, and gross and fine motor development

Supporting Relationships:

- Mealtimes observed were sociable events, staff chatted to the children. In the younger rooms children were encouraged to self-feed and staff were on hand to help as required, supporting independence and wellbeing. In the older rooms staff were observed to encourage the children to be independent in managing their personal care such as handwashing and serving their own food portions.
- Children were observed to have the freedom to move freely in their care room and independently choose their activities and play experiences. Activities and materials available were suitable for the age and stage of the children in the care rooms.
- Language, literacy and mathematics were supported in the care rooms through discussion, songs and stories.
- The presence of visual daily routine on display provided the children with a sense of stability, security, and predictability. In addition, staff were observed to give children verbal reminders in advance from moving from one activity to the next activity.
- Parents/guardians were given information on their child's food intake, toileting and sleep via a handover book at collection times. Staff discussed how this supported parent/guardian partnership.

Equipment and Materials:

- The furniture provided in the care rooms were low level and suitable to the needs of the children. There were appropriate chairs, highchairs and tables for feeding in the care rooms to facilitate the children to eat comfortably and independently.

- The care rooms in the service were designed with the age and stage of development having been taken into consideration and equipment and materials were visible and accessible enabling the children to independently access their choice of activity. For example, in the Jellyfish room there was adequate space for the toddlers to explore their environment which included a selection of age and stage appropriate toys and equipment including a mirror with a pull up bar. The layout of the both the Octopus room encouraged spontaneous, and interactive play. There was art equipment and materials accessible to the children, a home corner with a kitchen and supporting props, sensory toys, music equipment, building blocks and connecting equipment.
- There were two outdoor play areas available for the children with a soft ground surface. The equipment and toys available included, a slide, two playhouses, a water tray, a sensory tray, dinosaurs, cars and two outdoor kitchens with supporting equipment. In addition, there were various ride on equipment present providing learning opportunities for children.

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:

- On the unannounced arrival at the service by the inspectors, the entrance door leading into the premises was appropriately secured to prevent the children from exiting unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the premises throughout the inspection.
- The two outdoor play area were securely fenced reducing the risk of children from exiting unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to this area. Children who were brought out to the outdoor play areas from indoors were observed to be supervised.
- All low-level windows and patio doors had visibility strips. This helped prevent accidental collisions.
- The kitchen area was inaccessible to the children throughout the inspection.
- Toys and equipment used by the children were observed to be well maintained and in a good state of repair.
- There were no flexes or cables observed that were accessible to the children.

- Blind cords were secured safely out of reach of the children.

Infection Control:

- Windows in the care rooms were observed to be open which allowed for circulation of air and reduced the risk of cross infection.
- The sanitary areas, nappy changing facilities and one of the care rooms were equipped with liquid soap, warm water and hand drying facilities. The children were observed to be familiar with the routine to wash their hands before mealtimes.
- Foot pedal operated bins were available in the care rooms and sanitary areas to allow hygienic disposal of contaminated materials.
- Individual bed linen and waterproof mattress covers were used for the sleeping children and staff were familiar with the washing schedule.
- Cots and sleep floor mats were positioned 50 cm apart, as per best practice guidelines to reduce the potential risk of cross infection.
- The premises was observed to be in a clean and hygienic condition.
- Soothers were stored safely, and staff were knowledgeable on how to wash and sterilise soothers between use.

Administration of Medication:

- The service had individual care plans to identify the medication requirements and procedures in place for children who had specific medical conditions. Through discussion with staff, it was evident that staff were familiar and aware of the procedures to follow as per each care plan. Medication was stored out of reach of the children and in it's the original box clearly labelled with the individual child's name.

Safe Sleep:

- Outer clothing was removed from the children before sleep time.
- Children under two years of age were provided with a cot for sleeping.
- Children over two years of age were provided with their own individual sleep mat.
- An ambient temperature of 18-22°C was maintained in rooms where children over one years old slept.
- A sleep log was maintained while children slept. Staff were observed to physically check and record the colour, breathing and position of sleeping children was checked every ten minutes.

Fire Safety:

- Staff ensured the details of each child's attendance was recorded accurately and all fire emergency exit doors were clear from obstruction. This helped ensure the safe effective evacuation of children and staff in the event of an emergency.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. A cleaning agent was observed to be stored accessible to children in an unlocked press under the sink in the Seahorse room. This posed a risk of injury. It is acknowledged that the staff moved the cleaning agent out of reach of the children once the identified risk was brought to their attention by the inspection team.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. The cleaning agent was immediately returned to its proper storage press when the issue was pointed out to staff. It has remained there since. The monitoring of the storage of cleaning agents is already on the audit list for Managers and will remain so. The matter was raised at a continuous professional development meeting with all staff, and a reminder was given to staff to be extra vigilant. The Regional Manager will also monitor.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

- Photographic evidence leaning agent in the press.
- Photographic evidence of locked press.

Summary Comment

The actions taken by the registered provider through the corrective and preventive action plan have addressed the non-compliances identified under Regulation 23.

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) There was evidence to show that three adults hold certification in First Aid Response training, the three adults were available during the duration of the inspection.
- (2) (a) A suitably equipped first aid box was available and stored safely in an easily accessible and conspicuous position on a shelf in the care room.
- (b) The first aid box was observed to be easily available to the adults caring for the children attending the service.

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.*
- (2) *The record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection by-*
- (c) *an authorised person.*
- (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 of monthly fire drills was available in the service. The most recent fire drill took place on 24 April 2025.
- (b) The number, type and maintenance record of the firefighting equipment was up to date. Fire extinguishers were last serviced in January 2025. Smoke alarms were serviced on 11 March 2025.

(2) (c) Records were open to inspection by an authorised person. All records requested by the inspector were available for review.

(4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire was displayed in the care rooms in the service.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The service had adequate insurance for the number of children in attendance. The insurance certificate is valid until 27 March 2026.