

TUSLA REGULATORY INSPECTION REPORT



TUSLA Identifier: TU2015FL150

Name of Service: Links Childcare

Address of Service: Latchford Place,
Clonee,
Dublin 15.

Email Address: gillian@linkschildcare.ie

Name of Registered Service Provider: Ms Deirdre Kelly

Type of Service Registered: Full Day Care

Date of Inspection: 1 3 0 6 2 0 2 2

No of Pre-School Children present during Inspection: AM 66 PM 52

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 A Dunne
Title: Early Years Inspectors

Areas which were the subject of this Inspection

Governance	Health Welfare and Development of Child	Safety
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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).

Conditions If Applicable Not Applicable



Description of Service	<p>Links Childcare is a private childcare service which has been in operation since 2010. The service provides full time, part time and sessional education and care to children aged from 0 to 6 years. The service also provides a service for school aged children. The service operates from 7.30am to 6.30pm Monday to Friday and participates in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme.</p>
Premises	<p>The service operates from a two-storey purpose-built building in a residential development in Dublin 15. The service has five care rooms namely; Baby room (0-1 years) and Wobbler room (1-2 years) on the ground floor, Toddler room (2-3 years), Pre School 1 (3-5 years) and Pre School 2 (3-5 years) on the first floor. The children also have access to Activity Street on the ground floor which is used for art activities and meal times.</p> <p>The service has one designated cot room situated beside the Baby room, which has 15 standard cots. The outdoor area is situated to the rear and side of the premises and is divided into three areas which enables three rooms to access the area at once.</p>
Staffing	<p>The service currently employs 23 staff including the registered provider, area manager, director of support services, designated person in charge, a cook and 17 childcare staff. The registered provider does not work directly with the children. On the day of inspection there were 13 staff members and 1 student working directly with the children in the morning, 12 staff held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 or above on the National Framework of Qualifications.</p>
Methodology	<p>Tusla’s Early Years Inspectorate (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.</p> <p>The findings on inspection are based on;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information obtained through examination of documentation • Direct observation • Discussion with relevant staff <p>This inspection was unannounced and focused on areas of Governance, Health, Welfare and Development of Child and Safety. Inspections may also focus on other areas as required.</p> <p>The inspection process has been amended to minimise the amount of time that inspectors spend in the service. A sampling process was used to assess compliance under 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 did not include Pre School 1.</p>

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	<p>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>
Acknowledgements	<p>The Inspectors wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the area manager, director of support services, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.</p>

GOVERNANCE

Part III - Management and Staff

Regulation 9 - Management and Recruitment

- (1) A registered provider shall ensure that—
- the service has a designated person in charge and a named person who is able to deputise as required,
 - 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—
- consideration of references from the person's past employers, if any, and in particular the most recent employer, if any,
 - consideration of references from reputable sources in the case of a person who has no past employers,
 - 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
 - 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.
- (7) A registered provider shall ensure that all employees, unpaid workers and contractors are appropriately supervised and provided with appropriate information, and where necessary training, including in relation to the following:
- the policies, procedures and statements of the service specified in Schedule 5;
 - Part VIIA (inserted by section 92 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013 (No. 40 of 2013)) of the Act, and
 - these Regulations.

Compliance Information:

- (1)(a) The service had a designated person in charge and a named person to deputise as required.
- (b) The area manager was on the premises when the inspectors arrived unannounced and was present for the duration of the inspection. The area manager, and director of support services, were present for the feedback meeting.
- (2) A sampling process was used to assess compliance under Regulation 9 Management and Recruitment, as a result the files of 17 new staff employed and 1 student were reviewed.
- (a) The following references were from a past employer.
- Two validated written references for 9 members of staff employed.
 - One validated written reference for 6 members of staff and the student.
- (b) The following references were from a source other than a past employer.

Part III - Management and Staff

Regulation 9 - Management and Recruitment

- Two validated written references for 2 members of staff employed.
- One validated written reference for 6 staff members and the student.

(2)(c) Garda Vetting disclosures were available for 17 staff members and 1 student.

(d) International police vetting was available from 15 countries in respect of 13 staff members and 1 student who had resided outside of the jurisdiction for more than 6 months as an adult.

(4) Sixteen staff members employed within the service had evidence to confirm they held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 or above on the National Framework of Qualifications.

(7)(a) Documentary evidence was available to demonstrate that staff members had received training on the revised policies and procedures of the service prior to commencing work.

Part III - Management and Staff

Regulation 10 - Policies, Procedures etc. of Pre-school service

A registered provider of a pre-school service shall ensure that the written policies, procedures and statements specified in Schedule 5 are in place for the service.

Compliance Information:

All of the services revised policies, procedures and statements that were required to be available for parents were made available by text message and email. Staff were updated on the new policies and procedures specific to the service.

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) There were 13 adults working with 66 children in the morning and 11 adults working with 52 children in the afternoon as the table 1 below demonstrates.
Table 1.

Room	Type of Service	Number and Age Range in Years	Adults Present
Baby Room	*FDC	8(0-2 years)	3
Wobbler Room	FDC	8(1-3 years)	2
Toddler Room	FDC	12(2-3 years)	3
Pre School 1	ECCE and FDC	17(3-5 years)	2
Pre School 2	ECCE and FDC	21(3-5 years)	3

*Full Day Care

(8)(a) A weekly staff roster available demonstrated that two adults were always present on the premises.

HEALTH WELFARE & DEVELOPMENT OF CHILD

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

Compliance Information:

BASIC NEEDS:

- The service provides meals and snacks. A 4 weekly menu plan was observed by the inspectors and on discussion with staff, the children receive breakfast, a morning snack, a hot meal for dinner and an afternoon tea each day. On the day of inspection, the inspectors observed morning consisting of Fruit – apple banana and oranges, dinner at of macaroni and cheese and tea was homemade vegetable soup and homemade brown bread. Water was available and accessible should a child require a drink, at mealtimes and throughout the day.
- Additional servings were available for the children, and alternative food was observed to be provided for children with special dietary requirements.
- Children sat at tables that were appropriate to their ages. An adequate number of chairs were available for the children within the care rooms.
- Children under 2 years were facilitated to sleep when their needs dictated.
- Nappies were observed to be changed in accordance with the nappy changing policy and when required, and at set times including before dinner time. Nappy changes were calm, and staff were observed to positively engage with the children through chatting and singing.
- Older children were able to move freely in the care rooms and babies had safe floor space to explore and move around.

SUPPORTING RELATIONSHIPS AROUND CHILDREN:

- Staff in the care rooms maintained daily contact and communication with parents at drop off and collection. Staff in the care rooms maintained a daily written log of each child's eating, sleep times, nappy changes, and development, this was then shared with parents at collection.
- Staff were familiar with the children in their care and facilitated their preferences and choices by providing activities and games suitable to their age and stage of development. The routine in the Toddler room was flexible to the needs of the children with sleep time being facilitated earlier than planned as a child appeared tired.
- The children were observed to engage comfortably with the staff members present, staff in the Baby room were observed to engage with children through singing interactive songs.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 19 - Health, Welfare and Development of Child

PHYSICAL AND MATERIAL ENVIRONMENT:

- The layout of the care rooms promoted independent access to activities, equipment and materials, children’s toys and equipment were displayed on low shelving and accessible for children to choose their own work.
- In the Baby and Wobbler rooms - age-appropriate play materials in defined areas of interest were available to include:
 - Home corner areas (kitchens with supporting play food and utensils, phone, cash register, instruments),
 - Construction areas (building blocks - large and small, plastic bricks, construction waffles, shape sorters),
 - Small world play (dinosaurs, animals, trucks, cars, ambulance, garage, spaceship).
 - Tabletop activities (wooden puzzles and jigsaws),
 - Arts areas (paints and paint brushes).
 - For Gross motor development, mirrors, and balance bars.
 - Rest areas were available in the care rooms to enable children to rest and take a break from activities, they consisted of soft mats and cushions and books.
- Pictures of the children attending, with their families and with their birthdays were displayed in the care rooms which supported children’s identity and belonging.
- Activity Street was available on the ground floor to facilitate mealtimes for each care room and for activities such as arts and crafts, drama, and games.

Outdoor Areas:

The outdoor areas are surfaced with soft matting and enclosed with a high fence. There are a variety of toys to include an activity centre with a slide and ramp for the younger children, play kitchens, tricycles, and

Non-Compliance Information:

BASIC NEEDS:

1. In the Baby room, the children had breakfast between 8.30 – 9am, morning snack at 10am, dinner between 11 - 11.30am and the area manager confirmed that tea would be provided at 3pm to the 6 children who no longer take bottles in the service. As per the food and nutrition guidelines, mealtimes should be no longer than 3 hours apart.

PHYSICAL AND MATERIAL ENVIRONMENT:

2. The outdoor area used by the children from the Wobbler and Toddler rooms was observed to provide limited opportunities for the children to engage and expand their play. The Wobbler area consisted of a climbing frame with steps and a slide and three ride on tricycles. In the Toddler area the 12 children aged between 2-3 years of age had an empty play kitchen, an empty playhouse, two small balls, one ride on tricycle and a box of

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 19 - Health, Welfare and Development of Child

connecting shapes. As a result, the children were observed to wander around the area with four children crying and displaying signs of distress.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

CORRECTIVE ACTION

BASIC NEEDS:

1. It is noted and accepted that intervals between meals should be no longer than three hours, but within the flexibility of a "home from home" environment this can fluctuate from day-to-day and from child -to-child, depending on needs. To ensure regulations are met with more rigidity, a review of the routine has been undertaken, with the following tweaks recommended – breakfast remaining 8.30 to 9 o'clock, snack moving to approximately 10.30 from 10 o'clock, dinner moving from 11 to 11.40 and continuing to 12.15. Tea remaining at 3 pm. All times are subject to change to meet the individual sleep needs of the babies. Training has been provided for the Educators in the baby room who are also aware of the regulation on the three-hour gap, to ensure that it is met for each individual baby.

PHYSICAL AND MATERIAL ENVIRONMENT:

2. There is a wealth of materials for play available to be brought to the garden and it is unfortunate that on the day of the inspection the box of kitchen/playhouse equipment was not brought outside for use by the children. This has been rectified and is now part of the regular garden routine.

PREVENTIVE ACTION

BASIC NEEDS:

1. This schedule will be the subject of ongoing CPD and will be monitored by both the Manager and Regional manager.

PHYSICAL AND MATERIAL ENVIRONMENT:

2. The bringing of equipment to the garden has formed part of every training session and will be monitored by the Manager and Regional manager. A revision guide for the garden was sent to all staff, as is practice every August. This includes a reminder to fully equip the kitchen etc with appropriate play materials.

EVIDENCE SUBMITTED

BASIC NEEDS:

1. Corrective and preventive action has addressed non-compliance.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 19 - Health, Welfare and Development of Child

	PHYSICAL AND MATERIAL ENVIRONMENT: 2. Documentary evidence of a memorandum distributed to staff on the 2 August 2022.
Summary Comment	The registered provider has addressed the non-compliances as identified.

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: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The main entrance door which leads into the service is appropriately secured with an entry phone and buzzer system to prevent a child from exiting unsupervised and to prevent unauthorised access to the service. Parents can access the service by using a face recognition system. The play materials and equipment in the service were stored on stable-based low level shelving units. The play materials and equipment were observed to be safe and suitable for the developmental age of the proposed children. The tables and chairs in the care rooms that were used for tabletop activities and mealtimes were the appropriate height for the age of children accommodated in the room. The emergency exit doors of the service were unobstructed. The outdoor area was secured with high fences, railings and a secure gate therefore preventing a child from exiting the area and preventing unauthorised access to the service. All storage of waste both indoors and outdoors was inaccessible to the children. A system was available for the safe storage of cleaning agents and equipment. INFECTION CONTROL: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each care room and sanitary facility was ventilated by either openable windows and doors or active mechanical ventilation. Warm water, liquid soap and paper towels were available in the sanitary facilities and sinks used by the children. The children in the service were observed washing their hands before meals and after outdoor play. Soothers were stored in individual containers and sterilised by the service daily.
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Part VI - Safety

Regulation 23 - Safeguarding Health, Safety and Welfare of child

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each child that slept had their sheets and cellular blankets stored in separate bags labelled with their name. Bedding was washed twice per week or when required. Mattress covers in the sleep room were wipeable. <p>ADMINISTRATION OF MEDICATION:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The service had care plans in place and signed parental pre consent for the administration of emergency medication if required. All reviewed documentation relating to the administration of medication were completed and included the signature of two staff members and the parents on collection of their child. <p>SAFE SLEEP:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Every child under the age of 2 years was facilitated in a cot for sleep. The temperature of the sleep room and Toddler room while children slept was maintained between 16-20 °C as recommended by safe sleep guidelines. Ten-minute sleep checks to include colour, breathing, position and room temperature were recorded on all sleeping children in the Baby and Toddler rooms.
<p>Non-Compliance Information:</p>	<p>GENERAL SAFETY:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> A mat in the outdoor area used by the children from the Toddler room had sharp plastic edges accessible to the children. <p>SAFE SLEEP:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> One child under the age of two years, was observed to sleep in a cot with a crocheted blanket, while it is acknowledged it is cellular, there is a risk of a child's toes and fingers getting tangled in this blanket type. The temperature of Wobbler room at sleep time was recorded as follows: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 22.4°C at 11.50am, 22.3°C at 12.25pm, This exceeded the recommended temperature of 16-20 °C while children slept. The room temperatures of the Wobbler room at sleep time were not routinely recorded on the sleep records.
<p>Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider</p>	<p><u>CORRECTIVE ACTION</u></p> <p>GENERAL SAFETY:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> The mat was removed on the day of the Inspection and has been replaced. <p>SAFE SLEEP:</p>

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 23 - Safeguarding Health, Safety and Welfare of child

2. The crochet blanket was used at the request of the child's parents who have been advised since, that it does not meet TUSLA regulatory standards, and it has been replaced
3. The wobbler room doors are open each day until the preschool children go to the garden. It is at this stage that, on a very warm day, the temperature goes above the required level. We have decided now that we will open the double doors (usually open just one of them) from 11.30 to 2.00 if the temperature is above 20°. We will close the garden that the doors lead onto and there will still remain two other gardens available for the preschool children and babies who are awake. This has been done and the room temperature has not been an issue since.
4. A new record sheet has been designed, giving prominence to the recording of temperatures in the Cot and Sleep Rooms. This is completed twice a day as indicated on the form.

PREVENTIVE ACTION

GENERAL SAFETY:

1. The new mat will be checked by the Manager for wear and tear.

SAFE SLEEP:

2. In the unlikely event of a similar parental request, a crochet blanket will not be accepted.
3. The opening of door/windows and the record of temperatures will be monitored by the Manger and Regional Manager, as well as the Educarers in the sleep rooms.
4. The new form will be inspected by the Manager and Regional Manager.

EVIDENCE SUBMITTED

- 1-3. Corrective and preventive actions have addressed non-compliances.
4. Documentary evidence of a revised form to address the non-compliance.

Summary Comment:

The registered provider has addressed the non-compliances as identified.

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) The registered provider ensured that two staff members were trained in First Aid Response (FAR) training.

(2) The first aid box within the service was suitably equipped.

(a) The first aid box was stored in an easily accessible and conspicuous position on the premises.

(b) At all times when the service was in operation, first aid supplies were accessible to adults in the event that a child may require treatment.

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

Compliance Information:

(1)(a) A written record was available of the fire drills completed in the service. The last recorded fire drill took place on the 30 May 2022.

(b) A record was available for the number, type and maintenance of the fire equipment which were last serviced in February 2022 and of the mains powered smoke alarms in the premises, which were last serviced on the 21 September 2022.

(4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire was conspicuously displayed in the entrance hall and each care room of the premises.