

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

<b>TUSLA Identifier:</b>	TU2015FL150
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<b>Name of Service:</b>	Links Childcare
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<b>Address of Service:</b>	Latchford Place, Clonee, Dublin 15
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<b>Eircode:</b>	D15 HD63
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<b>Name of Registered Provider:</b>	Gillian Kelly
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<b>Service type:</b>	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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<b>Date of Inspection:</b>	24/10/2024
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<b>No of pre-school children:</b>	AM	88	PM	76
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<b>Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:</b>	Early Years Inspectorate 2 <sup>nd</sup> Floor, Unit 4/5, The Nexus Building, Blanchardstown Corporate Park, Ballycoolin, Dublin 15   D15 CF9K
<b>Inspection undertaken by:</b>	T. Nelson and E. Finnegan Hayes
<b>Title:</b>	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).	

<b>Conditions if applicable</b>	Not Applicable
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### Description of service

Links Childcare is a full day care service located in a residential area of Dublin 15 and is registered to provide early childhood care and education to a maximum of 106 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 is one of 13 services operated by the registered provider.

Links Childcare operates from a two-story purpose-built premises and has six care rooms. The facilities on the ground floor include the Jellyfish Room (12 to 18 months old), Octopus Room (18 to 24 months old) and Sea Turtle room (2 to 3 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, the service 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 (2-4 years old) and Sea Horse room (3-4 years old). Further sanitary facilities for staff and children and a staff room are available on this floor.

A fully enclosed outdoor area is located to rear of the premises.

### Staffing

There are currently 29 staff employed by the service including the regional manager, the person in charge, two deputy persons in charge, a chef, and 24 childcare staff who work directly with the children. There were 30 adults present throughout the day of the inspection, including the person in charge, Regional Manager and the Director of Support Services. 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/ safety. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under:

- Regulation 9(1),(2)(a)(b)(c)(d),(3) (4) (7) Management and Recruitment
- Regulation 11(1),(4), Staffing Levels
- Regulation 16(1)(h)(i)(k)(3) Records in relation to the Preschool Service
- Regulation 17 Information for Parents
- Regulation 19(1)(b) Health, Welfare and Development of child
- Regulation 23 Safeguarding the Health, Safety and Welfare of the Child
- Regulation 32 Complaints

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under the following:

- Regulation 9(7) Management and Recruitment
- Regulation 16(1) (h)(i)(k) – Records in relation to Preschool Service.
- Regulation 19(1)(b) Health, Welfare and Development of child
- Regulation 23 Safeguarding the Health, Safety and Welfare of the Child

As a result, the scope of the inspection included the Jellyfish and Starfish Rooms and did not include the Octopus, Sea Turtle, Dolphin and Sea Horse rooms.

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.

### Additional Information

This inspection was triggered by information received by the Inspectorate.

### Acknowledgments

The inspectors wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the management team, 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.*

*(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:*

*(a) the policies, procedures and statements of the service specified in Schedule 5;*

*(c) these Regulations.*

### Compliance Information

(1) (a) The service had a designated person in charge and named person to deputise as required.

(b) The person in charge was present during the inspection, and a review of the roster showed the person in charge or deputy person in charge were on the premises at all times.

(c) There was a clear management structure in place which was documented in job description and displayed throughout the premises. Staff reported being aware of the lines of authority.

(2) The files of 19 staff who were new to the service since the last inspection held on the 9 January 2024 were reviewed. The registered provider had completed the following checks:

The registered provider had completed the following checks:

(a)(b) Thirty-eight validated written references were available from recent past employers or a source other than a past employer for the 19 full files reviewed.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all staff members employed. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) Documentary evidence showed that eighteen adults had lived outside of the state for six months or more as adults and international police vetting from that state was available for inspection.

(3) Documentary evidence available showed that all of the checks outlined in (2) had been carried out prior to any of the adults having contact with the children in the service.

(4) The 19 staff who worked directly with children attending the service held 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.

(7)(a)(c) The service ensured staff were appropriately supervised and provided with appropriate information, and where training. The following was observed:

- A record of an induction was maintained for all new staff members, of which eight were reviewed, where staff declare they have read and understand the appropriate policies and procedures. Discussions with new staff state they had received adequate information for their role.
- A record was maintained for each staff member of the following: a one-month check in meeting, a 12-week supervision meeting, a 6-month probation and an annual appraisal. A sample of these each of these documents were reviewed.
- Documentary evidence available showed 17 new staff had completed online safeguarding children training.
- Documentary evidence was available to show that staff had attended training on topics which included safe sleep, nappy changing, food, positive behaviour, ratios and the role of mandated persons in child protection.

### 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

There following policies specified in Schedule 5 were available and reviewed: (b) Complaints, (d) Infection Control, (f) Safe Sleep, (j) Accidents and Incidents, (l) Healthy Eating and (u) Supervision of Staff.

#### Non-Compliance Information

The registered provider did not ensure the following:

- (g) The following policies required under Regulation 10, detailed in Schedule 5 were not available to parents:  
(o) Policy on staff absence, (q) recruitment policy and (r) risk management policy.

#### Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

#### Corrective and Preventive Action

Corrective Action: The policies not available to parents on the day of the inspection have now been drafted by the service.

Preventive Action: The service checked Schedule 5 of Regulation 10 and verified all policies were in place and will ensure all policies will be reviewed regularly.

### **Supporting documentation submitted**

The policies were submitted: Staff Absences, Recruitment and Risk Management.

### **Summary Comment**

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 10 has been adequately addressed.

## 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.*

*(4) Subject to paragraph (5), where a registered provider contemporaneously provides-*

*(a) a sessional pre-school service, and*

*(b) a full day care service or a part-time day care service, or both, the minimum ratio of adults to children applicable for the duration of the sessional pre-school service in respect of the children attending that service shall be the ratio specified in paragraph (3).*

### **Compliance Information**

The registered provider ensured the following:

- (f) On the day of inspection there were an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the service to meet their basic care needs. For example:
- There were 27 staff available to the 88 children in attendance when the inspectors arrived unannounced to the service at 9.50am.
  - A review of retrospective records showed there were 15 staff available to 64 children on the 24 July 2024 and 17 staff available to 60 children on the 31 July 2024.

(4) The adult to child ratios were correct throughout the inspection. 24 staff were allocated to work directly with the 88 children who were present on the morning of the inspection with a breakdown as follows:

- Jellyfish room – 4 adults to 11 children aged between 12 to 18 months old.
- Octopus room – 4 adults to 10 children aged between 18 months to 2 years 6 months old.
- Sea Turtle room – 4 adults to 16 children aged between 2 years 8 months to 4 years old.
- Dolphin room – 4 adults to 15 children aged between 2 to 3 years old.
- Starfish room – 4 adults to 17 children aged between 2 years 8 months to 4 years old.
- Seahorse room – 4 adults to 19 children aged between 3 to 4 years old.

Fifteen staff were allocated to work directly with the 76 children who were present on the morning of the inspection with a breakdown as follows:

- Jellyfish room – 3 adults to 9 children aged between 12 to 18 months old.
- Octopus room – 2 adults to 10 children aged between 18 months to 2 years 6 months old.
- Sea Turtle room – 2 adults to 12 children aged between 2 years 8 months to 4 years old.
- Dolphin room – 3 adults to 15 children aged between 2 to 3 years old.
- Starfish room – 2 adults to 14 children aged between 2 years 8 months to 4 years old.
- Seahorse room – 3 adults to 16 children aged between 3 to 4 years old.

### 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;*
- (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) The registered provider ensured the following:

- (h) Attendance records detailing the arrival and departure of the children on a daily basis were maintained.
- (i) A record was maintained of the staff roster which was reflective of the staff present on the day.

(3) Retrospective records were requested and were made available for review.

### Non-Compliance Information

(1) The registered provider did not ensure the following:

(k) Following a review of a sample of 16 records, the registered provider ensured a full record in writing was maintained for accident and incidents. The following was observed:

- Six records did not have a parent's signature.
- Three records did not have the full details of the child recorded.

### Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

#### Corrective and Preventive Action

Corrective Action: The service corrected the accident/incident forms that were missing either a signature or a child's full name. Specific refresher training on the completion of these forms was organised for the service.

Preventive Action: The Regional Manager/Manager of the service will deliver training to all new staff/management in the future. and they commit to 'spot check' forms

#### Supporting documentation submitted

Outline of training that was delivered.

### Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 16 has been adequately addressed.

## Part IV – Information and Records

### Regulation 17 – Information for parents

*A registered provider shall ensure that a parent or guardian of a child proposing to attend the service is provided with the information referred to in subparagraphs (a) to (g) of Regulation 16(1).*

#### Compliance Information

The registered provider ensured the following information referred to in Regulation 16 (1) was available to parents.

- (a) Photographs and details of the names, position, qualifications and experience of staff were displayed outside each of the care rooms.

(b) The service Tusla certificate was displayed within the service and detailed the class of service and the age profile of children for which the service is registered to provide services. This was also detailed in the parent handbook.

(c) (d) (e) The statement of purpose and function outlined the adult: child ratios, the type of care or programme provided and the facilities available within the service.

(f) The opening hours and fees of the service were displayed on the noticeboard in the entrance hall of the service.

(g) The service policies were available via the service website.

### 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-*

*(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)(b) The registered provider ensured the following care practices were in place:

- Mealtime practices were observed to be timely and pleasant experiences for the children. Documentary evidence showed meals provided were regular and varied, with a three-week menu plan available. The daily routine and discussion with staff established that breakfast was served on arrival, a fruit platter was served mid-morning, a hot meal at mid-day and a tea in the afternoon. Staff reported alternative meals were available for those with additional dietary requirements, and that food preferences were catered for. Additional portions were observed to be made available at mealtimes and staff reported that additional food such as such as fruits, yogurts and crackers were available outside of mealtime if a child was hungry. Drinks of water were available throughout the day in the care rooms. This was in line with the service policy on healthy eating.
- Nappy changing and toileting were observed to be regular, respectful experiences for the children. Staff in the Jellyfish room reported nappy changing was completed in line with the set schedule or as required and this was evidenced in a review of the handover sheet which recorded the daily nappy changes for each of the children.
- Staff reported that the service will try to accommodate parents' requests around the timing of sleep however the child's need for sleep would be prioritised. There was a dedicated sleep room adjacent to the

Jellyfish room and staff in the Starfish room reported that there is a bed available should a child require sleep.

- Engagement with families and parents was facilitated via a handover sheet where details such as the children's food intake, sleep, toileting and if the child had a change of clothes during the day was shared on a daily basis. This also detailed what supplies are required such as spare clean cloths, nappies and wipes. Conversation with parents at collection were observed to detail all aspects of the child's day including the amount of food eaten at dinner time and the child's form and mood. These conversations were observed not to be rushed; with parents given time to ask questions.
- Children had freedom of movement within the rooms, and all children were observed to access the outdoor play area on the day of inspection.
- Staff were observed to have respectful, warm and responsive interactions with the children through the use of soft tones and positive non-verbal communication strategies such as eye contact and being at the children's level.

### 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

The registered provider ensured the following measures were in place to safe guard children:

##### General Safety:

- The service had an electronic entry and exit system in place which was managed and monitored by staff. A digital log of the entry and exit of staff attendance was maintained. Internal doors had handles up high out of reach of children. This restricted unauthorised persons from gaining access to the premises and prevented children from exiting the service unsupervised.
- There was a child safeguarding policy in place, with a display of the reporting procedures and staff reported being aware of these procedures.
- Cables were secured out of reach of children.
- Risk assessments were available and completed up to date for both the indoor and outdoor play area.
- Hazardous items were not accessible and were kept on high shelves or in locked presses.

## Infection Control:

- Nappy changing was observed to be in line with the service policy. Staff were observed to use the appropriate protective equipment such as gloves and aprons and staff and child completed handwashing after the nappy change. Individual labelled creams were available for all children and staff discussed how these were used when required.
- Handwashing was observed to be completed prior to mealtimes, and thermostatically controlled warm water, liquid soap and single use hand towels were available at all wash hand basins used by the children and the staff members.

## Safe Sleep:

- The temperature of the cot room while children were sleeping was maintained appropriately.
- A log was maintained where the temperature of the room and the colour, breathing and position of sleeping children was checked every 10 minutes.

## Part VIII - Notifications and Complaints

### Regulation 32 – Complaints

- (1) A registered provider shall ensure that the complaints policy of the service specifies-
- (a) the procedure to be followed by a person for the purposes of making a complaint in relation to the service,
  - (b) the manner in which such a complaint shall be dealt with, and
  - (c) the procedures for keeping a person who makes such a complaint informed of the manner in which it is being dealt with.
- (2) A registered provider shall ensure that-
- (a) a record in writing is kept of a complaint made to the provider in respect of the pre-school service, and
  - (b) the complaint is duly dealt with in accordance with the provider's complaints policy.

## Compliance Information

The registered provider ensured the following:

(1)(a)(b)(c) There was a complaints policy available detailing the procedures to be followed for making a complaint, the manner in how the service deals with a complaint, and the procedures for keeping the complainant informed of this process.

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(2)(a)(b) There was a record available of complaints made to the service, and there was evidence available that complaints were dealt with according to the service complaints policy.