

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier: TU2015FL150

Name of Service: Links Childcare

Address of Service: Latchford Place, Clonee, Dublin 15

Eircode: D15 HD63

Name of Registered Provider: Gillian Kelly

Service type: Full Day, Part Time, Sessional

Date of Inspection: 09/10/2025

No of pre-school children:	AM	89	PM	85
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:
Early Years Inspectorate
2nd Floor, Unit 4/5
The Nexus Building
Blanchardstown Corporate Park
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Dublin 15 | D15 CF9K

Inspection undertaken by: L Jameson & L.A Webster

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 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 from 07:30am - 6:30pm, Monday to Friday. The service operates a sessional service, offering the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme, from 9.30am to 12.30pm, 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), the Octopus room (1.5 – 2 years old) and the Sea Turtle room (2 years and 8 months 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 (2.5 to 3 years old), the Starfish room (3 - 5 years old) and the Seahorse room (4 - 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

The registered provider was not present on the day of the inspection and does not work in the service. There are currently twenty-nine adults employed by the service, including a regional manager, the person in charge, the deputy person in charge, an assistant manager, the chef and twenty-four early years practitioners, one of whom is employed under the Access and Inclusion (AIM) model. There were twenty-seven adults present when the inspectors arrived unannounced in the service, including the deputy person in charge, the assistant manager, the chef and twenty-four early years practitioners. The person in charge arrived in the service shortly after the inspectors and a regional manager from another area arrived in the service at approximately 11:00am, both remained on site to support 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.

The scope of the inspection included the Jellyfish room, the Octopus room and the Dolphin 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.

Additional Information

The inspection was triggered as a result of information received by the inspectorate.

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.

(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;

Compliance Information

(2) The full staff files of eleven adults who had been employed since the last inspection were reviewed along with the Garda vetting disclosure of two staff members which had expired since the last inspection.

(a) Fourteen written and verified references were available from past employers.

(b) Eight written and verified references were available from a source other than a past employer.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures were available for the thirteen adults employed in the service. 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 ten adults who had lived in a country other than Ireland for a period of six consecutive 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 eleven adults before employment commenced.
- (4) Eleven adults 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) Discussions with staff members and management, and a review of a sample of fifteen staff induction and supervision records, demonstrated that staff members had received appropriate information and had been adequately trained in the service policies and procedures. The staff induction consisted of a variety of topics including room management, health and safety, care practices and child safeguarding. Files also included documented evidence of one month and twelve-week staff supervision reviews.

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 that there was an adequate number of adults working with the children throughout the inspection. In the morning, there were twenty-four adults caring for eighty-nine children and during the afternoon, there were twenty-one adults caring for eighty-five children.
- (2) The adult child ratios were correct when the inspectors arrived unannounced to the service and throughout the inspection. The person in charge, the deputy person in charge and the assistant manager were available in a supernumerary capacity to provide cover in rooms as needed. The regional manager, who arrived in the service shortly after the inspectors, was also available to provide additional support where required.

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.

(3) A registered provider shall ensure that no practices that are disrespectful, degrading, exploitive, intimidating, emotionally or physically harmful or neglectful are carried out in respect of a pre-school child whilst attending the service.

Compliance Information

(1)

(b) The following practices were observed on the day of inspection which supported the health, welfare and development of the children attending:

- Staff members were attentive and prompt to meet the children's individual and specific needs, offering comfort through warm and positive interactions.
- Staff members were observed to positively reinforce the children's achievements with recognition, praise and encouragement, resolving disagreements and minor conflicts in a calm and prompt manner, joining the children at their level, listening to them and offering support. The interactions and direction given to children by staff members was observed to be appropriate for the age and developmental stages of the children.
- Staff members were observed to actively supervise and guide the children throughout the day, sitting at low levels, playing with the children and providing support during transitions. Children appeared content and comfortable in their environment and showed familiarity with their caregivers and the daily routine.
- Mealtimes were observed to be a sociable and pleasant event, with staff members sitting alongside the children, engaging in meaningful conversations and offering support and encouragement to the children. Water was readily available to the children in the care rooms and the outdoor play area.
- Nappies were changed at scheduled times and more frequently when required. Staff members were observed to invite the children to have their nappy changed in a gentle tone.

(3) On the day of inspection, staff members were observed to engage in practices that were supportive, respectful and in line with best practice. Documentary evidence was available to show that staff members had completed child safeguarding training. Staff members reported to the inspection team that they were aware

of practices that were disrespectful or harmful to children and showed awareness of the procedures to report such practices.

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.
- (3) A record in writing referred to in paragraph (2)(a) shall-
- (a) include the nature of the complaint and the manner in which the complaint was dealt with, and
 - (b) be open to inspection on the premises by an authorised person.

Compliance Information

The registered provider ensured the following:

- (1) The service had a complaints policy which outlined the following:
- (a) The procedures to be followed when making a complaint.
 - (b) The way complaints would be dealt with.
 - (c) The procedures for keeping the complainant informed on how the complaint is being dealt with.
- (2) The registered provider ensured:
- (a) A record of complaints was maintained.
 - (b) That complaints were handled in line with the service policy.
- (3)
- (a) Documentary evidence was available to show that should a complaint be made against the service a system was in place to record the information.
 - (b) Records were open to inspection by an authorised person.