

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2020DR001
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Name of Service:	Links Childcare
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Address of Service:	Birch Hill, Clay Farm, Ballyogan Road, Dublin 18, Co. Dublin
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Name of Registered Provider:	Gillian Kelly
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Service type:	Full Day
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Date(s) of Inspection:	11/07/2024
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Date 2 of Inspection:	12/07/2024
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No of pre-school children:	AM	67	PM	68
Day 2	AM	62	PM	63

Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	1st floor Trinity Building, IDA Business Park, Southern Cross Road, Bray, Co. Wicklow
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Inspection undertaken by:	Sarah Quigley & Fiona Carty
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Title:	Early Years Inspector(s)
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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
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Description of service

Links Childcare is located in a residential, urban area of Leopardstown, South Co. Dublin and is 1 of 13 Links Childcare services. The service is registered to provide full day care and education to children aged between 3 months and 5 ½ years. The service is open from Monday to Friday between 07:30 and 18:30 hours and operates from a purpose-built premises on the ground floor of a mixed housing development. The service consists of 5 preschool care rooms which children are allocated to by age range and stage of development. A large enclosed outdoor play area is available to the rear of the premises.

Staffing

The service currently employs 15 staff members including a cook and an area manager who works between several of the Links Childcare centres. The registered provider was not present during the inspection.

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/ information and records/ 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 regulation 15.

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 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.

Compliance Information

(2) Documentation was reviewed in respect of 20 adults who commenced employment in the service following the last date of inspection. Of these 20 adults, 14 were employed directly in the centre and 6 were providing relief cover from other Links Childcare services. Documentation relating to 9(2)(c) for these 20 adults and the area manager who was present in the service on the day of inspection. The following records were available for the adults:

(a) (b)

The registered provider demonstrated that they had verified the references obtained from 2 sources for each of the 20 adults.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for each of the 21 adults. 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.

(d) International police vetting was available for 16 adults who required it.

(4) 17 of the adults held a relevant major award in Early Childhood Care and Education on the National Framework of Qualifications. 2 of the adults who did not have the required qualification were in possession of a letter of eligibility to practice from the Minister of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth. One adult did not require a qualification as they did not work directly with the children.

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)
An adequate number of adults were working directly with the pre-school children attending the service throughout the inspection.
- (2)
The registered provider ensured that the minimum ratio of adults to children was maintained in the service at all times throughout the inspection. There were 15 adults working directly with 67 children on the 1st day of inspection and 14 adults working directly with 62 children on the 2nd day of inspection.

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.*

Compliance Information

A sample of 15 records of preschool children maintained in the service were reviewed by the inspectors to assess compliance. The documentation reviewed evidenced that each of the records detailed all of the required information outlined under Regulation 15(1) as detailed above.

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.*

Compliance Information

- (1)
- (h) Documentation reviewed evidenced that children’s attendance was being accurately recorded in each care room.
 - (i) A staffing roster was available in the service and was reflective of the staff members present throughout the inspection.
 - (j) Records of medication which had been administered to children in the service were available. A sample of the documentation was reviewed and contained all of the necessary details.
 - (k) Records of accidents and incidents which had occurred in the service were available. A sample of the documentation was reviewed and contained all of the necessary details.

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

The inspectors observed appropriate care practices in place throughout the inspection. The children moved freely in all care rooms exploring their environment, playing with each other and the staff. Each care room spent time outdoors and children were dressed appropriate to the weather. Older children used the toilet independently and children wearing nappies had these changed regularly.

Staff availed of opportunities for warm one to one interaction when assisting children with personal care and demonstrated a robust knowledge of the individual needs of each child in their care. Staff demonstrated warmth and affection in their interactions with the children, addressing them by name and speaking in positive gentle tones. Staff comforted children promptly when they became upset.

Meals and snacks were provided at regular intervals to the children throughout the inspection. Staff sat with the children when eating. Self-feeding was promoted in younger care rooms and staff assisted children where required. Bibs were worn during meals to protect the children's clothing. Drinking water was available within the rooms and was offered regularly to the children. Infants brought bottles of milk from home and were given these according to their individual routines. Children were assisted to clean their faces at appropriate times.

Younger children were placed to sleep according to their individual routines and when they showed signs of tiredness. The sleep room was calm and conducive to sleep. The children who had soothers were offered these when they were being placed to sleep. Staff provided the children with reassurance and comfort as they were settling them to sleep, sitting next to them and speaking in gentle tones. Older children were given the opportunity to sleep within their care rooms after dinner time. Designated cosy areas were provided within the rooms where children could relax or take a break from activities.

Non-Compliance Information

1. Children's noses were not cleaned in a timely manner in the Wobbler room during the inspection. Some children were observed for prolonged periods of time with nasal discharges on their faces.
2. Two children who became wet from outdoor play and dribbling did not have their clothes changed and were subsequently placed to sleep in the damp clothing.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

1. Retraining was done with the staff in the Wobbler Room to underpin the importance of the regular checking and cleaning of noses. The staff were new to the setting.
2. Again, the Regional Manager followed up on the issue of damp clothing with the staff in a specially convened training session on the Monday following the Inspection.

The aspects of childcare identified as being non-compliant are fully covered in induction and on-going training and this will be continued. A lack of communication between the new staff was identified as the cause of this issue and work was done with the staff members on this aspect of their room management.

Supporting documentation submitted

Supporting documentation was submitted and reviewed by the early years inspector.

Summary Comment

The regulatory requirement has been met.

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 inspectors found by observation of practice, review of documentation, discussion with staff and inspection of the premises that the registered provider had taken the following steps to safeguard children attending:

General Safety:

The toys and play equipment observed in use by the children on the day of inspection were safe and in good working order. Cleaning products and hazardous materials were stored securely out of reach of the children. The entrances into the service were appropriately secured to prevent unauthorised access or a child exiting the service unsupervised. The care rooms were observed to be safe and free from hazards.

Infection Control:

An infection control policy was in place to inform practice. Schedules were in place and maintained to ensure the service, equipment and materials are regularly cleaned. Staff were observed to carry out consistent hand washing as appropriate. Staff stated appropriate exclusion periods for adults and children with infectious illnesses were implemented in the service as per the policy. Pedal operated bins were in place throughout the service for the disposal of waste.

Administration of Medication:

There was written evidence of prior parental consent for the administration of both temperature reducing and prescribed medications, and there were procedures in place to safely administer and document such medication if required, including in the case of an emergency. Staff adequately detailed the procedures for administering medication when required during discussions with the inspectors and had appropriate documentation available to record such administration if required. Individual care plans were in place for children requiring emergency medication.

Safe Sleep:

Staff were familiar with safe sleep guidance and placed babies on their backs to sleep. Sleep logs were maintained in the dedicated sleep room and the younger care rooms, and individual children's observations recorded room temperature, breathing, colour, and position every ten minutes. Standard cots and low-level beds were available for sleep and were used in accordance with children's ages and developmental needs. The temperature of the rooms where children slept were maintained at the required temperature ranges.

Fire Safety:

The designated fire escape routes were clearly indicated and free from obstruction on the day of inspection. Staff members adequately outlined the evacuation procedures in place in the event of a fire and stated that fire drills are practiced regularly on a monthly basis.

Non-Compliance Information

Infection Control:

Handwashing practices observed in the Wobbler room were at variance with the relevant policy in place in the service and posed a risk of cross contamination. Children's hands were not consistently washed after outdoor play and prior to dinner time.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

Infection Control:

This non-compliance was noted in the same room as above and formed part of the training by the Regional Manager. It was noted at the feedback session that many children's hands were washed (as would be fully expected) but a lack of a system meant that some children were missed. The focus of the training was the communication around the implementation of that system for the new staff.

As above, washing of hands is central to all on-going training and will continue to be. The staff in the wobbler room were monitored and supported in the days after the inspection. This aspect will feature as always in in-going practical CPD sessions.

Supporting documentation submitted

Supporting documentation was submitted and reviewed by the early years inspector.

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Summary Comment

The regulatory requirement has been met.