

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2023DR005
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Name of Service:	Links Childcare
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Address of Service:	Clay Farm Drive, Clay Farm, Leopardstown, Dublin 18,
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Eircode:	D18 F63H
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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:	23/04/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	112	PM	110
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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
Inspection undertaken by:	H Sutherland and O Quill
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).

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Description of service

Links Childcare is one of 14 privately owned services operated by the registered provider. Full day, part-time and sessional care and education are provided for pre-school children aged 0 to 6 years, between the hours of 7.30am to 6.30pm Monday to Friday. The service is located at ground floor level and operates from a purpose-built premises within an apartment complex in an urban residential area in Leopardstown, Dublin 18. The facility comprises of eight care rooms, a dining area and a large enclosed outdoor space to the rear of the premises.

Staffing

There are currently 38 adults employed to work in the service including the person in charge, 36 adults employed to work directly with the children and a chef. The registered provider does not work in the service; the area manager arrived shortly after the inspectors arrived at the service and remained present to facilitate 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, health, welfare and development of child, safety and records. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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 included the following rooms, Jellyfish, Octopus, Otter and Sea turtle.

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, the area manager, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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 a named person to deputise as required.
- (b) The designated person in charge was present when the inspectors arrived unannounced at the service. A review of the staff roster showed that a designated person was on the premises at all times during the opening hours of the service.
- (c) There was a clear management structure in place within the service, which was confirmed with staff members and the person in charge during discussions with the inspectors.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

(2) Following a review of previous inspection information and information available during the inspection, it was determined that 14 new staff members had been employed since the previous inspection on 31 July 2025. All of these staff members worked directly with the children. In addition, there was 3 students present on educational work placement programmes. A total of 17 files were reviewed. Garda vetting for one staff member whose disclosure was identified as due for renewal was requested for review.

- (a) Twenty-one written and verified references were obtained from past employers.
- (b) Thirteen written and verified references were obtained from sources other than previous employers.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures were available for 18 adults. The service also demonstrated compliance with 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 had lived outside of the state for periods exceeding six months.

(3) Documentation reviewed demonstrated that the procedures specified above under Regulation 9(2) had been carried out before the adults commenced working in the service.

(4) Documentation was available to show that the 14 adults who worked directly with children attending the service held a qualification deemed appropriate by the Department of Children, Disability and Equality (DCDE).

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 paragraph (2)

(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) The inspectors observed that an adequate number of adults were present and engaged in direct work with the children.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

- (2) The minimum adult-to-child ratio was maintained for the duration of the inspection. There were 31 adults working directly with 112 children during the morning of the inspection.
- (8) The roster provided to the inspectors by the person in charge showed that a minimum of two staff members were on the premises at all times during the operation of the service.

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

The inspectors found that children's learning, development and well-being were facilitated through conversations with staff and the observation of the following practices:

Mealtimes were observed to be calm and relaxed. Younger children had the opportunity to feed themselves in a manner appropriate to their age and stage of development. Staff sat with the children and offered support where required. Staff explained that the service provides all of the children's meals and that there were always alternative options available for children who did not eat their meal, as well as additional portions for children requesting more. Drinking water was available in the care rooms and children were provided with drinks of water with their meals. Nappy changing was carried out in a positive and sensitive manner, and staff were observed talking to children throughout the process, supporting them to feel safe and secure. Older children were observed accessing the toilet independently, with staff remaining close by providing support when needed. The individual sleep needs of younger children were met; this was observed on the day of the inspection where children slept at various intervals. Older children were facilitated with a scheduled rest time, and children who did not require a sleep were provided with an alternative space to play. Staff sat with children during their transition to sleep and provided comfort and reassurance as needed.

Staff were observed to interact warmly and respectfully with children throughout the inspection. Children demonstrated engagement and enjoyment in their learning, for example young children were observed engaging in messy play and dancing, while older children were observed completing puzzles, playing with sand and mark making with stencils. Play was child led, and children had autonomy in choosing their preferred play activities. Staff described positive strategies that they have implemented for children requiring additional support during

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

times of transition, including visual timelines and picture cards. Staff use daily charts to record key information regarding the children for example, mealtimes, sleep and nappy changing. This information is provided to the parents/guardians during handovers. Parents also receive information from the service via email.

The environments were laid out with low level open shelving and contained a variety of play equipment, such as, musical instruments, construction materials, home areas and small world materials. Fine motor development was supported through the use of puzzles, shape sorters and mark making materials. The rest areas had a range of books to support children's language development. The outdoor area provided an alternative environment for children. The space had a range of developmentally appropriate equipment, and children were observed to move freely around the area. Staff explained that they bring additional resources to the outdoor space. During outdoor play children were observed playing with balls and construction materials.

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:

- Care plans were in place for children who required emergency medication or intervention, and staff demonstrated awareness of the procedures to be followed in the event of an emergency.
- The entrance door to the service was adequately secured to prevent unauthorised persons from entering and to ensure children could not exit unsupervised.
- Cleaning agents and medication were stored safely out of children's reach.
- Low level presses were fitted with locks.

Infection Control:

- Pedal operated bins were in use in the service to support the safe disposal of waste.
- Liquid soap, warm water and single use paper towels were available at wash hand basins.
- Effective hand washing was observed to control the spread of infection. For example, children were supported to wash their hands after using the toilet, before lunch and following nappy changing.
- Bed linen was stored individually and washed on a weekly basis and as needed.
- The care rooms were visibly clean and well maintained. Cleaning schedules were available in each room outlining cleaning tasks.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

Administration of Medication:

- Staff demonstrated an awareness of the procedures to take to ensure medication is given safely if needed, including obtaining written parental/guardian consent.
- Administration of medication records were available for use if required.

Safe Sleep:

- Staff were observed to carry out physical checks on sleeping children every 10 minutes.
- A sleep log was available for review, detailing the room temperature, breathing pattern, colour and position of the child.
- Standard cots and mats were available for sleep and were used in accordance with children's age.

Fire Safety:

- Staff adequately detailed the procedure to safely evacuate children from the service in the event of a fire.
- The designated fire escape routes were clearly marked and free from obstruction on the day of inspection.

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) Documentation reviewed showed that four adults held First Aid Responder (FAR) certification and were available to the children attending the pre-school service.

(2)

(a) Suitably equipped first aid boxes were available and stored safely in easily accessible and prominent positions in the reception area, the kitchen and the Octopus room.

(b) The first aid boxes were observed to be readily available to the adults caring for the children attending the service.

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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 written record was available detailing fire drills that had taken place in the service. The record showed that the last fire drill took place on 12 March 2026.
 - (b) The number, type and maintenance record of firefighting equipment and smoke alarms on the premises were up to date. Fire extinguishers were serviced in January 2026 and smoke alarms were serviced on 6 March 2026.
- (2)
- (c) Written records referred to in paragraph (1) were kept onsite and made available to the inspectors upon request.
- (4) The procedures to be followed in the event of a fire were displayed in the care rooms and communal areas.