

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2023DR005
--------------------------	-------------

Name of Service:	Links Childcare
-------------------------	-----------------

Address of Service:	Clay Farm Drive, Clay Farm, Leopardstown, Dublin 18
----------------------------	-----------------------------------------------------

Eircode:	D18 F63H
-----------------	----------

Name of Registered Provider:	Gillian Kelly
-------------------------------------	---------------

Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
----------------------	--------------------------------

Date of Inspection:	31/07/2025
----------------------------	------------

No of pre-school children:	AM	78	PM	82
-----------------------------------	----	----	----	----

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, R Duff
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 a privately owned service, registered to provide sessional, part-time and full day care 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 with a shock absorbent surfacing.

Staffing

There are currently twenty-nine adults employed to work in the service including a centre manager and a cook. On the day of inspection there were twenty-five adults present including the centre manager, the regional manager, the registered provider and a cook. The registered provider arrived after the inspection commenced and did not remain present for the duration of 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.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations
Regulation 9 (1) (a-c), (2) (a-d), (3), (4), (7) Management and recruitment

Regulation 11(1), (2) Staffing levels

Regulation 16 (k) Record in relation to preschool service

Regulation 19(1)(b), (3) Health welfare and development of child

Regulation 23 Safeguarding health welfare and safety of child

Regulation 27 Supervision

Regulation 28 Insurance

Regulation 32 Complaints

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under Regulation 19 Health, Welfare and Development of child, Regulation 23 Safeguarding health welfare and safety of child and Regulation 27 Supervision. As a result, the scope of the inspection included the Otter room, the Shark room, the Dolphin room and the Seahorse 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

This inspection was triggered by the receipt of information which was furnished to the Early Years Inspectorate on the 22 July 2025.

Acknowledgments

The inspectors wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, 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

(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;

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 and deputy person in charge were on the premises throughout the inspection.
 - (c) There was a clear management structure that identified the lines of authority and accountability in the service and the specific roles and responsibilities of each employee. This was evidenced through conversation with staff and documentation displayed within the service.
- (2) Following a review of previous inspection information, information available on inspection and discussion with the person in charge it was determined that twenty-one adults had commenced employment in the service since Regulation 9 (2) was last inspected on 21 February 2024. Documentation required under Regulation 9(2)(3)(4) was reviewed in respect of the twenty-one adults. In addition, Garda vetting for three staff members whose disclosures were identified as due for renewal were requested for review.
- (a) Twenty-five written and verified references were available from past employers.
 - (b) Seventeen written and verified references were available from a source other than a past employer.
 - (c) Garda vetting disclosures from the National Vetting Bureau of An Garda Síochána were available for twenty-four adults. 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 nineteen adults who had lived outside the State for a period exceeding six months as an adult.
- (3) Documentation reviewed evidenced that the procedures specified above under 9(2) had been carried out prior to the twenty-one adults commencing employment in the service.
- (4) Documentation was available to show that the twenty-one adults held at least a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 or above on the National Framework of Qualifications, a letter of eligibility to practice or a qualification deemed equivalent by the Department of Children, Disability and Equality (DCDE).
- (7) The registered provider demonstrated that all staff members received appropriate supervision and were supplied with the necessary information and training prior to commencing employment and continuously thereafter and records were made available for the inspectors to review.
- Evidence of this was observed as follows:

- Staff described the induction process for new employees, which included training in the services policies and procedures and practical instruction covering routine operational tasks.
- Staff reported that regular team meetings and one to one supervision meetings take place at regular intervals. Records of one-to-one supervision meetings held with staff dating from February 2024 to July 2025 were available for review. Records of three team meetings carried out between February and June 2025 were reviewed and topics discussed included infection control, settling in children, sun safety, outdoor activities, child safeguarding, sleep rooms coming into summer and feeding children.
- The person in charge and staff reported that additional training and continuous professional development is carried out throughout the year. Records were available for continuous professional development carried out from February to June 2025 covering topics such as positive behaviour management, first aid, emergent interests, transitions and environments.
- Evidence was available to show that staff employed to work in the service had completed Children First training in line with the Children First Act 2015 and were aware of their role as mandated persons.
- The Child Safeguarding Statement was available for review in the reception area of 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.

Compliance Information

- (1) An adequate number of adults were working directly with the children at all times for the duration of the inspection.
- (2) The minimum ratio of adults to children for full day care services was adhered to for the duration of the inspection. There were 78 children supervised by 20 adults in the morning and 82 children supervised by 20 adults in the afternoon. The deputy person in charge, person in charge and regional manager were available to provide support when required.

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:

(k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.

Compliance Information

(k) A sample of ten accidents and incident forms were reviewed and found to contain the required information in relation to accidents, injury or incident involving preschool children attending 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-

(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

During the inspection the inspectors observed that children’s needs were met in a warm, responsive manner. Staff advised that the service provides breakfast, a morning snack, a hot meal and tea. Children were observed eating fresh fruit for their morning snack and macaroni and cheese for their dinner. During mealtimes, staff sat with children and engaged them in positive conversation while encouraging self-feeding. Additional portions were available for children requesting more and alternatives were offered to children who declined the main meal. Staff supported the children to manage their personal care, bibs were provided to protect the children’s clothes from

becoming soiled or wet when eating and children's hands and faces were cleaned after their meal. Drinking water was available to children throughout the day for example, at mealtimes and during outdoor play.

Staff signalled to the children that a change in activity was approaching, ensuring a relaxed pace and supporting children to transition smoothly to the next activity. For example, staff in the Otter room were observed to gently explain to children that they were going to change their nappy prior to taking them to the nappy changing room and staff in the Seahorse room were observed to sing songs to signal it was time for them to wash their hands. Nappy changing was carried out in an unhurried manner and staff were observed to use this time for warm one to one interaction singing songs and speaking in playful tones with the children. Staff reported that nappies are changed on a schedule and as needed throughout the day. Older children were encouraged to use the toilet independently and staff remained close by to provide support if needed. The lighting was dimmed in rooms where children slept and staff were observed to comfort and reassure children during sleep time and remained present until each child was settled. Older children were provided with a comfortable space to rest if needed.

Staff demonstrated warm and nurturing interactions with children throughout the day. Inspectors observed staff continuously dropping to children's level, using reassuring tones and positive language when engaging with children. Play was child led, with children moving freely around the care room and choosing to play independently or in small groups. Staff provided a variety of activities such as story time, bubble play, painting and block play, children who chose not to participate were supported to engage in an alternative play of their choice. They appeared to be content focusing on their chosen play, demonstrating confidence and an awareness of their personal preferences within the play environment. Conflicts were managed effectively, for example staff in the Shark room were observed to drop to the children's level during times of challenge and calmly discussed the issue supporting problem solving. The inspectors found through discussion with staff that each room had scheduled times for outdoor play and children attending the rooms observed during the inspection had the opportunity to engage in outdoor play. During this time staff were observed to engage enthusiastically with children supporting their social interactions.

(3) On the day of inspection inspectors did not observe any care practices that were disrespectful, degrading, exploitive, intimidating, emotionally or physically harmful or neglectful to the children in attendance.

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:

- Staff demonstrated clear understanding of the procedures to be followed in the event of children attending the service requiring emergency treatment and care plans were available for review.
- The entrance doors into the service were adequately secured to prevent unauthorised persons accessing the service or children exiting unsupervised.
- Cleaning agents and medication were stored safely out of reach of children.
- The outdoor area was secured and safe from hazards.
- Staff were aware of children's food allergies and adequately described how allergies are managed in the service.

Infection Control:

- Suitable handwashing facilities with warm water, liquid soap and single use paper towels were available within the care rooms, toilets and nappy changing facilities.
- Children were supported to wash their hands after nappy changing and before meals and after outdoor play. Staff were also observed to follow effective hand washing practices.
- Pedal operated bins were in use in the sanitary areas to support effective hygiene practices.
- Staff reported that children's bedding was laundered weekly and bedding was observed to be stored individually when not in use to prevent cross contamination.

Administration of Medication:

- Staff adequately detailed the services procedure for administering medication when required during discussions with the inspectors.
- Administration of medication records were available for review.

Safe Sleep:

- Staff were observed to carry out physical checks on sleeping children every ten minutes and a sleep log was available detailing the room temperature, breathing pattern, colour and position of the child.

- Sleep plans were available for review for five children under the age of 24 months that had transitioned onto a bed.
- Standard cots and low-level beds were available for sleep and were used in accordance with children's developmental needs.

Fire Safety:

- Emergency exits were observed to be unobstructed for the duration of the inspection.
- Staff adequately detailed the procedure to safely evacuate children from the service in the event of a fire and evacuation procedures were on display in the care rooms.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 27 – Supervision

A registered provider shall ensure that pre-school children attending the service are supervised at all times.

Compliance Information

On the day of inspection all children were supervised appropriately. There were 78 children in attendance being supervised by 20 adults in the morning and 82 children supervised by 20 adults in the afternoon.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

A registered provider shall ensure that the pre-school service is adequately insured.

Compliance Information

Documentation reviewed evidenced that the service is adequately insured for the type of service provided and the number of children in attendance.

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

(1) The service had a complaints policy which clearly outlined the following:

(a) The procedure to be followed when making a complaint to the service.

(b) The manner in which such a complaint shall be dealt with.

(c) The procedures for informing the complainant of the progress and outcome of the complaint.

(2)

(a) A written record of complaints was maintained within the service.

(b) The inspectors reviewed records pertaining to three separate complaints made to the service between November 2024 and July 2025. Records reviewed of the first two complaints demonstrated that complaints were dealt with in line with the services complaints policy. The investigation into the third complaint was under review at the time of the inspection.

(3) Records included:

(a) The nature of the complaint and the manner in which it was dealt with.

(b) Records were available for review on the day of inspection.