

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2025DR001
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Name of Service:	Links Childcare
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Address of Service:	Kilternan Wood, Kilternan, Co. Dublin
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Eircode:	D18 DDW9
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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:	14/07/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	36	PM	37
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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, L Magee
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
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Description of service

Links Childcare is a private service located in a residential area in Kiltarnan, County Dublin. The facility is purpose built and comprises of six care rooms; a designated sleep room and two fully enclosed outdoor spaces to the rear of the premises. On the day of inspection three of the care rooms were in operation; the Octopus room, the Sealion room and the Seahorse room. The service is registered to provide sessional, part time and full day care to children aged one to six years and opens from 7.30am to 6.30pm Monday to Friday.

Staffing

There are currently thirteen adults employed to work in the service including the person in charge, a cook and an area manager who works between several services. On the day of inspection there were thirteen adults present including the person in charge, the area manager, ten childcare staff and a cook. The registered provider was not present on the day of inspection and 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 announced and focused on the area of governance and health, welfare and development of child. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under the following regulations:

Regulation 9 (1), (2), (3), (4) Management and recruitment
 Regulation 11 (1), (2) Staffing levels
 Regulation 19 (1)(a), (b) Health welfare and development of child

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.

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 two named persons to deputise as needed.
 - (b) The designated person in charge and the two persons appointed to deputise were on the premises at all times during the inspection.
 - (c) There was a clear management structure and staff were aware of their own roles and responsibilities and the roles and responsibilities of their colleagues.
- (2)
- (a) Twenty-three written and verified references were available from past employers.
 - (b) Three written and verified references were available from a source other than a past employer.
 - (c) Garda vetting disclosures were available for thirteen 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 in respect of ten adults who had lived outside of the State for a period longer than six months as an adult.
- (3) Documentation reviewed evidence that the procedures specified above under 9(2) had been carried out prior to the thirteen adults commencing employment in the service.

(4) Documentation was available to show that twelve adults 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 equivalent 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.

Compliance Information

- (1) On the day of inspection there were an adequate number of adults working directly with the children to meet their care needs. There were ten adults available to thirty-six children in the morning and ten adults available to thirty-seven children in the afternoon. The person in charge and the area manager were available to provide support if required.
- (2) The minimum adult to child ratio was maintained for the duration of the inspection.

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

(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 person in charge reported that all meals and snacks were prepared on the premises and a menu was available for review. Children were provided with fresh fruit for their morning snack and chicken curry for their dinner. Mealtimes were observed to be well organised and provided a calm social experience. Children in the Sealion and Seahorse rooms used a separate dining area for their dinner and the children in the Octopus room ate in their care room. Staff sat with children, encouraging conversation and supporting them to try the meal provided. Suitable alternatives were offered to children who did not eat their dinner. The person in charge reported that the service maintains ongoing communication with parents to support children with particular dietary preferences. Self-feeding was encouraged, and staff were available to support if a child required additional assistance. Children had the opportunity to eat their meal at their own pace and activities were provided for children who had finished eating. Drinking water was freely available to children throughout the day and children were given water with their snack and dinner.

Children's care needs were met in a timely and responsive manner. For example, inspectors observed staff promptly responding when children displayed signs of tiredness, needed to use the toilet, when they became upset and when they needed items of clothing changed following mealtime. Children's nappies were changed on a schedule, morning, afternoon and evening. Staff reported that children were changed outside these times if needed. Older children were observed using the toilet independently with staff available to support if required. Children had the opportunity to sleep and rest during the inspection. Staff in the Octopus room reported that children's individual sleep needs were accommodated with four of the children requiring two naps per day and the rest of the children requiring one in the afternoon. Children attending the Sealion room slept at a designated time after lunch and a suitable rest area was available for children in the Seahorse room to take break from activities if needed. Staff were observed to sit with children and comfort and reassure them and remained present until each child was settled.

Staff supported children during transitions by using verbal signals and singing familiar songs to prepare them for the change in activity. For example, staff sang songs at tidy up time, before mealtimes and when transitioning from the dining area to the care room. Staff were observed to display positive dispositions such as empathy, kindness and patience. They were familiar with children and actively engaged in play and spoke in warm, friendly tones. Daily records were maintained in room books, documenting information on meals, personal care routines,

rest periods and emergent interests. Staff described how they share this information with parents during handovers supporting continuity of care.

The indoor environments were well planned and laid out in a way that allowed children to move around the space with ease. The care rooms were equipped with appropriately sized furniture, including low level tables, chairs and shelves, enabling children to engage in activities comfortably and independently. Defined interest areas offered a rich variety of materials to support children's exploration and learning. These included materials such as, home corners, musical instruments, dress up clothing, transport, mark making materials, small world materials such as animals and dolls, sand tables and rest areas with a wide variety of books. Manipulative resources were available across the care rooms to promote fine motor skills. Some of which included puzzles, interlocking shapes, threading materials and mark making materials.

The outdoor area was well equipped with artificial grass and a variety of resources to support physical development and imaginative play. It included bikes, balls, a playhouse, a wooden den, blackboard, cones, blocks and a buddy bench. Children in the Sealion room and the Seahorse room were observed in the outdoor play area and staff in the Octopus room explained that children are taken out twice daily, morning and afternoon.