

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(s) of Inspection:	13/08/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	51	PM	54
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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 M Bermingham
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).

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Description of service

Links Childcare is a private service located in a residential area in Kilternan, County Dublin. The facility is purpose built and comprises of six care rooms; a designated sleep room and two fully enclosed outdoor spaces; one large space to the side and a small space to the front of the service. On the day of inspection five of the care rooms were in operation; Octopus, Sealion, Dolphin, Seahorse and Starfish rooms. The service is registered to provide full day, part time and sessional care and education to children aged 1 to 6 years. Opening hours are from 7.30am to 6.00pm Monday to Friday.

Staffing

There are currently 18 adults employed to work in the service including the person in charge, 16 early years educators and a cook. On the day of inspection there were 18 adults present including the person in charge, the regional director, regional manager, 14 early years educators 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 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.

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A sampling process was used to assess compliance under Regulation 16(1) (k), Regulation 19(1)(b) and Regulation 23. As a result, the scope of the inspection included the Octopus, Sealion, Dolphin and Seahorse rooms.

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 regional director, regional manager, person in charge, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

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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) Following a discussion with the person in charge, it was confirmed that 15 adults commenced employment in the service since Regulation 9 was last inspected on 14 July 2025. Documentation required under Regulation 9 (2), (3) and (4) was reviewed in respect of the 15 adults as detailed below. The requirements of Regulation 9(2)(c) relating to Garda Vetting were reviewed for 16 adults.

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

(b) Twelve written and verified references were available from sources other than past employers.

(c) Garda Vetting disclosures were available for 16 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 in respect of 15 adults who had lived outside of the State for a period longer than six months as adults.

(3) The procedures specified in paragraph (2) were completed prior to the 15 staff members commencing employment in the service.

(4) Documentation was available to show that 11 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 qualification deemed equivalent by

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the Department of Children, Disability and Equality (DCDE). Three adults progressing through a recognised qualification held a letter from the DCDE for temporary permission to practice. One adult did not require a qualification.

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 paragraphs (2) to (7)-

(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 number of adults present and working directly with the children on the day of the inspection was appropriate to support their needs.
- (2) The registered provider ensured that the minimum ratio of adults to children was maintained on the day of inspection. There were 51 children present in the morning, supervised by 14 adults, and 54 children present in the afternoon supervised by 14 adults. The person in charge and the deputy person in charge were available to provide relief cover to the care rooms when required.
- (8) (a) 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 operational hours of the service.

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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) Written records of accidents and incidents that occurred in the service were available on the day of inspection. A review of a sample of 15 records confirmed that the required information was appropriately documented.

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

1(b)

The registered provider ensured appropriate and suitable care practices were in place in the service as follows:
Staff reported that the service provides all of the children with breakfast, a morning snack, a hot lunch and an evening snack. The food served on the day of the inspection was observed to be varied and nutritious. Mealtimes were calm, sociable experiences for children, with staff sitting at child level and engaging in friendly conversation. Children were encouraged to develop independence in ways appropriate to their age and stage of development. For example, younger children were observed to self-feed, while older children were observed to carry out self-care tasks, such as cleaning their own faces and tidying up after meals. Younger children were provided with support eating their meals when required. Water stations were in place in each care room, and children were offered drinks of water throughout the day and with their meals.

Staff reported that nappy changing was carried out on a schedule and as needed. Staff were observed to speak with children in warm, respectful manner during nappy changing supporting them to feel safe and secure. Older

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children used the toilet independently, and staff were available to support when required. Each of the care rooms had a designated space for children to rest or take a break from activities. Children requiring a sleep had the opportunity to do so at a designated time after lunch. The rooms where children slept were darkened with soft music playing, creating a suitable environment for sleep. Staff reported that the routine was flexible to allow children to sleep outside of this time if they displayed signs of tiredness. Staff responded to children's individual needs during their transition to sleep providing comfort and reassurance.

The care rooms were laid out to accommodate children's independence and freedom of movement. Play was child-led, and children were observed to have autonomy in choosing resources and activities of interest to them. Staff were warm and respectful in their interactions with children. They used friendly and playful tones and responded promptly and sensitively when children required comfort. Transitions were smooth, with staff giving children prior notice that a change in activity was approaching. Songs and playful tones were used to support the transitions, and children appeared familiar with the flow and routine during the day. Staff stated that parents have the opportunity to discuss their child's day at drop off and collection. During this time information is shared on key aspects of the children's day, including mealtimes, sleep, nappy changing and activities, supporting continuity between the home and the service. Each of the care rooms had a scheduled time for outdoor play and some of the children were observed playing outdoors during the inspection.

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:

- The entrance doors to the service were adequately secured to prevent unauthorised persons from entering and to ensure children could not exit unsupervised. Access to the service was controlled through a bell entry system, with all visitors required to be admitted by staff.
- The internal doors were appropriately secured and prevented children accessing unsafe areas.
- Blinds were safe and fitted correctly, with blind cords secured and out of reach of children.
- The windows were secured and positioned out of children's reach.
- Cleaning agents were stored safely out of children's reach.

Infection Control:

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- Pedal operated bins were in use in the sanitary areas and care rooms to support the safe disposal of waste.
- Effective hand washing was observed to control the spread of infection. For example, children were supported to wash their hands following nappy changing, after using the toilet, and before their lunch.
- Suitable hand hygiene facilities were available in the service to support effective hand hygiene practices.
- The service was visibly clean and well maintained and cleaning schedules were in place.

Administration of Medication:

- Medications were stored in their original packaging out of reach of children. Staff adequately detailed the procedures to safeguard children when administering medicine. This included ensuring written consent was obtained from parents/guardians, having a second staff member present during administration, and maintaining records.
- Administration of medication documents were available for use if required.
- Care plans were available for children who required emergency medication and staff members were aware of the procedures to follow in the event of an emergency

Safe Sleep:

- Standard cots, mats and floor beds were available for sleep and were used in accordance with children's age and developmental needs.
- Sleep plans were available for children under 24 months who had transitioned from a cot to a floor bed.
- The temperature of the rooms where children slept were maintained at the required temperature range.
- A sleep log was available for review, detailing the room temperature, breathing pattern, colour and position of the child.

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.