



Report of an inspection of a Designated Centre for Disabilities (Children).

Issued by the Chief Inspector

Name of designated centre:	Balruddery Fields
Name of provider:	Talbot Care Unlimited Company
Address of centre:	Co. Dublin
Type of inspection:	Announced
Date of inspection:	19 May 2026
Centre ID:	OSV-0008661
Fieldwork ID:	MON-0041935

About the designated centre

The following information has been submitted by the registered provider and describes the service they provide.

Balruddery Fields provides a residential service for children with intellectual disabilities, physical disabilities and acquired brain injuries. The objective of the service is to provide a therapeutic home environment. Balruddery Fields is a nurse led service and the designated centre aims to promote each child's independence and maximise their quality of life through interventions and supports which are underpinned through therapeutic care approaches particularly trauma and attachment informed care and practice and Person-Centred Care and Support. The provider aims to provide services at Balruddery Fields are provided in a home like environment that promotes Dignity, Respect, Kindness, and Engagement for the child.

The following information outlines some additional data on this centre.

Number of residents on the date of inspection:	2
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How we inspect

This inspection was carried out to assess compliance with the Health Act 2007 (as amended), the Health Act 2007 (Care and Support of Residents in Designated Centres for Persons (Children and Adults) with Disabilities) Regulations 2013, and the Health Act 2007 (Registration of Designated Centres for Persons (Children and Adults) with Disabilities) Regulations 2013 (as amended). To prepare for this inspection the inspector of social services (**hereafter referred to as inspectors**) reviewed all information about this centre. This included any previous inspection findings, registration information, information submitted by the provider or person in charge and other unsolicited information since the last inspection.

As part of our inspection, where possible, we:

- speak with residents and the people who visit them to find out their experience of the service,
- talk with staff and management to find out how they plan, deliver and monitor the care and support services that are provided to people who live in the centre,
- observe practice and daily life to see if it reflects what people tell us,
- review documents to see if appropriate records are kept and that they reflect practice and what people tell us.

In order to summarise our inspection findings and to describe how well a service is doing, we group and report on the regulations under two dimensions of:

1. Capacity and capability of the service:

This section describes the leadership and management of the centre and how effective it is in ensuring that a good quality and safe service is being provided. It outlines how people who work in the centre are recruited and trained and whether there are appropriate systems and processes in place to underpin the safe delivery and oversight of the service.

2. Quality and safety of the service:

This section describes the care and support people receive and if it was of a good quality and ensured people were safe. It includes information about the care and supports available for people and the environment in which they live.

A full list of all regulations and the dimension they are reported under can be seen in Appendix 1.

This inspection was carried out during the following times:

Date	Times of Inspection	Inspector	Role
Tuesday 19 May 2026	07:30hrs to 17:45hrs	Jennifer Deasy	Lead

What residents told us and what inspectors observed

This inspection was an announced inspection, scheduled to inform decision making in respect of an application to renew the centre's certificate of registration. This centre is home to two young children and is located in a suburban community close to many local amenities and facilities. This inspection found that the centre was providing a very high standard of care which was meeting the requirements of the Regulations, and which was ensuring that children were being supported in a child-centred and rights-informed manner. It was evident that the provider was endeavouring to go beyond the requirements of the Regulations and was striving to meet the National Standards.

The centre is a bungalow which was seen to be well-presented and maintained both internally and externally. It was laid out in a manner suitable to meet the children's physical and mobility needs. Each child had their own bedroom which was personalised to their preferences. Children shared a large bathroom, a sitting room and a kitchen. Each of these rooms were accessible to the children. The decor of the centre was child-friendly and colourful artwork and photographs of the children decorated the walls. The environment of the centre was accessible and there was information available to children on the staff arrangements, the menu for the week and their rights in respect of making complaints and safeguarding.

The inspector met the children in the morning as they were getting ready to leave for school. Both children were seen to be well dressed and were clearly comfortable in the presence of staff. Their care needs were tended to in a dignified manner which upheld their privacy. While one child waited for their school bus they were supported to make a choice of an activity using photographs. Staff were observed chatting to, and smiling with, this child while they waited. Both children communicated mainly through non-speaking modes including using pictures, a high tech device, body language, facial expression and gesture. One child used some words in addition to these modes. Throughout the inspection, staff were seen to be tuned in to the children's communication systems. Staff were responsive to children's communication and used augmentative and alternative modes (AAC) to assist the children to make choices and to exercise control over their day.

The inspector had the opportunity to speak with six frontline staff over the course of the day, including the staff coming off night duty and the staff on day shift. The inspector found that these staff were very informed of their roles and responsibilities and of the children's assessed needs, care plans and their preferences in respect of care. Staff members demonstrated a strong commitment to safeguarding the children in their care, promoting their wellbeing and ensuring that they were well-connected with their families and communities. They gave many examples of personally-meaningful activities and goals which the children were taking part in, both in the centre and out in the community. Staff members spoke about the

children and their families in a warm and respectful manner, and positive and warm interactions were seen between staff and children throughout the day.

While the children were at school, the staff team cleaned the centre and organised children's bedrooms. The inspector saw that the staff team respected children's personal belongings and care was taken to make the children's rooms comfortable and relaxing. The centre was very clean and the inspector saw staff engaging in good infection prevention and control and hand hygiene practices.

When the children returned from school they were greeted by the staff in a warm manner. The inspector saw that staff took care to protect one child from the rain when they were coming in to the centre from the bus. The staff then tended to the child's care in a manner which upheld their dignity. The inspector heard staff chatting with the child during this time and heard staff consulting with the child about the care. It was evident that staff were providing care in a rights informed manner which ensured children's rights were being upheld; for example, when one child required eye drops to be administered, the staff asked the child if it was ok to put the eye drops in and then waited until the child indicated through their body language that they were ready for the drops. Although this took some time, the staff was observed to be patient and wait for the child to be ready. Plenty of praise and positive encouragement was provided to the child during this process.

The children were supported to engage in play throughout the afternoon. One child played various games and activities with the inspector and the staff team including throwing a ball, playing with toys and watching videos on a tablet. The inspector saw that staff were responsive to the child's play and that interactions were positive and fun. The child frequently sought affection from staff and this was provided in a warm and appropriate manner. This child's right to autonomy was also respected by staff throughout the evening. For example, their choice of timing for personal care and for meals was respected. The second child was supported by staff to engage with toys and sensory lights as per their preferences. The inspector observed kind and gentle interactions including, for example, staff members offering head and foot massages and reading stories to the child.

Social workers for both of the children spoke with the inspector on the day of inspection. Both gave very positive feedback in respect of the care provided by the staff team. They described how the children were well supported and how the staff team were mindful of the children's needs and their rights. Both social workers complimented the service on their communication with relevant stakeholders and with the arrangements for children to have contact with their families.

The inspector met with, and spoke with, parents of one of the children. The parents reported that their child was doing very well in the service and spoke of how welcome they are made to feel when they visit. They complimented the communication systems in place and said that they are very happy, with one parent saying that their child "...has improved so much". A parent of the second child was unable to take a call; however, they had completed a resident questionnaire and had completed provider questionnaires and given feedback on the service. These

written documents showed that the parent was also very happy with the service, saying that "the staff are all brilliant. Can't thank them enough".

Overall, it was evident to the inspector that the children living in this centre were living in a warm and comfortable home which was meeting their assessed needs in a child-centred manner while ensuring that their rights were being upheld and their wellbeing and development was being promoted. The next two sections of the report will describe the governance and management arrangements of the centre and how these impacted on the quality and safety of care.

Capacity and capability

This section of the report describes the management arrangements of the centre. This inspection found that the service had effective leadership, governance and management arrangements in place with clear lines of accountability. These management arrangements were ensuring that children were in receipt of a very high standard of care.

There was an internal management structure suitable to the size, purpose and function of the centre. Leadership was demonstrated by the management team and it was evident that there was a commitment to continuous service improvement. The leaders of the centre, including the staff nurses who took responsibility for the oversight of care when the person in charge was unavailable, demonstrated that they understood the needs of the children living there.

There were sufficient resources directed to provide care to the children in a consistent manner which was promoting positive attachments. At all times, there were sufficient staff available to meet the needs of the children in a safe and child-centred manner. Staff members had the necessary skills and qualifications to provide care and support to the children, and were registered with the relevant professional regulatory body where required.

Staff spoken with understood their roles and responsibilities. They had clear reporting lines and were aware of policies and procedures to be followed. Staff were performance managed and were supported to exercise their personal and professional responsibility for the provision of child-centred, effective and safe care and support. A written record of each supervision and performance appraisal was maintained. Staff members also had opportunity to attend regular training to ensure they had the necessary skills to meet the needs of the children living here.

Information governance arrangements were in place to ensure that the service was complying with legislation and using best available evidence to support the provision of child-centred, safe and effective services. A system was in place to gather information about the quality and safety of the service, including outcomes for the

children. This information was used to inform management decisions and to drive continuous improvements in service provision.

Registration Regulation 5: Application for registration or renewal of registration

A full and complete application to renew the centre's certificate of registration was submitted within the timeframe required. Appropriate fees were paid and all prescribed information was submitted. This afforded the provider the protections of the Health Act (2007) as amended while going through the renewal process.

Judgment: Compliant

Regulation 14: Persons in charge

The centre was overseen by a person in charge who was employed in a full-time capacity. They were suitably qualified and experienced in line with the requirements of the Regulations. They demonstrated a comprehensive understanding of the service and the children's needs and were clearly committed to ensuring that children were in receipt of good quality care and support.

The person in charge had oversight of two designated centres, one of which was this one. They were supported in their role by team leaders and staff nurses in the centre who provided oversight of the day to day running of the centre.

Judgment: Compliant

Regulation 15: Staffing

The centre was staffed by a team of staff nurses and healthcare assistants as required by the children's assessed needs. The inspector saw that there were sufficient staff on duty to meet the needs of the children in a child-centred manner. A review of the centre's rosters from the 27th April to 24th of May 2026 showed that there were sufficient staff rostered on each day. The rosters also demonstrated that there were no agency staff utilised in the centre and that gaps in the roster were filled by regular relief staff. This was effective in ensuring continuity of care and promoting positive attachments between the children and staff.

The inspector reviewed six of the Schedule 2 files for staff (50% of staff employed in the centre). The Schedule 2 files were maintained in line with the requirements of the Regulations. They included, for each staff member, a copy of a valid An Garda Síochána vetting disclosure, two written references and photographic identification.

For nurses employed in the centre, a record of their registration with the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland was maintained.

Judgment: Compliant

Regulation 16: Training and staff development

There was a very high level of compliance with mandatory and refresher training maintained in the centre. All staff had received and were up-to-date with key trainings in fire safety, managing behaviour that is challenging, infection prevention and control, Children First and safeguarding. Staff members had also completed additional training in key areas including epilepsy and autism awareness.

Staff spoken with demonstrated an understanding of their roles and responsibilities. They were knowledgeable regarding the management arrangements and of how to escalate concerns through these systems.

Staff were in receipt of regular support and supervision. Each staff received quarterly supervision from the person in charge. The inspector reviewed the supervision records for three staff. Supervision was seen to occur as frequently as required by the provider's policy and was used to address performance-related issues and to develop staff.

Monthly staff meetings also took place in the centre. The records of these meetings from February 2026 and March 2026 were reviewed. The inspector saw that these provided a forum for the person in charge to inform the staff team of pertinent issues such as safeguarding, risk assessments and training needs.

Judgment: Compliant

Regulation 22: Insurance

The provider submitted a copy of their certificate of insurance as part of their registration renewal. It was seen that the provider had effected a contract of insurance against injury to the residents in the centre.

Judgment: Compliant

Regulation 23: Governance and management

There were clearly defined management systems in place in the centre which were appropriate to the size of the service, and the number of children living there. Staff nurses took the lead in ensuring the day to day oversight of care and reported to the person in charge, who also maintained a regular presence in the centre. Staff members spoken with were informed of the management systems, including the on-call arrangements for out-of-hours support and the safeguarding reporting structures.

The person in charge had regular meetings with senior managers. For example, monthly governance meetings with the assistant director were held, along with monthly meetings with other persons in charge, the director of service and the chief operating officer. The inspector reviewed records of these senior meetings from February to May 2026. It was seen that they were used to provide updates to the person in charge on provider level policy updates, finances and human resourcing issues. The monthly meetings with the assistant director provided further scope to explore centre specific issues such as risk assessments, care plans, restrictive practices and safeguarding concerns.

The provider level audits were seen to be very comprehensive and detailed. The inspector reviewed the six monthly unannounced audits from July 2025 and March 2026, along with an annual review of care from 2025. The annual review provided opportunities for families and children to provide feedback on the service. The audits clearly identified gaps or risks to the service and set out actions to be implemented to address these. The inspector saw that actions were progressed against audits, which demonstrated that these were an effective tool to drive service improvement.

Judgment: Compliant

Regulation 3: Statement of purpose

A statement of purpose was available in the centre, and was submitted to the Chief Inspector as part of the application to renew the centre's certificate of registration. The statement of purpose contained all of the information as required by the Regulations including information on the services and facilities to be provided.

Judgment: Compliant

Quality and safety

This section of the report describes the quality of the service and how safe it was for the children who lived there. This inspection found that children were being supported to have choice and control in their everyday life and were being facilitated

to develop and maintain relationships with their family and community. Children's assessed needs were being met in a homely, warm environment which was promoting their privacy, dignity and welfare.

Children living in this centre were supported to exercise choice across a range of activities. They were provided with opportunities for new experiences and to integrate into their community. The service was proactive in identifying and facilitating participation in the wider community including through social and sports clubs.

The designated centre was very homely. The routines of the service reflected those that would be typically experienced in everyday life for many children. Children had opportunities for play and relaxation and staff were seen to engage with children in these activities to make them enjoyable and interactive. The living environment had also been designed to ensure it met the needs of the children living there.

Each child's family was welcomed by the service and they were encouraged to participate in the children's lives. Children were supported to attend family occasions by the staff team and to be a part of these celebrations.

Children's personal plans were completed in consultation with the family and the multidisciplinary team. They were regularly reviewed and updated, and staff spoken with were informed of children's plans and their care needs.

There were policies and procedures for ensuring that children were protected from all forms of abuse and neglect. These procedures were understood by staff spoken with and staff were aware of how to report any such concerns.

Regulation 12: Personal possessions

Children's possessions were seen to be treated with respect. Each child had sufficient storage for their personal belongings and their photographs, toys and important personal items were displayed neatly in their home. Records of possessions of value were maintained to ensure that these were safeguarded.

Each child had access to a weekly allowance to enable them to participate in their preferred activities. The inspector was told by the person in charge that this allowance was sufficient. The inspector saw, on a review of daily notes, that children regularly engaged in preferred activities including sports activities, visiting museums and parks and going out for food and drinks.

Judgment: Compliant

Regulation 13: General welfare and development

Each child's welfare and development was being promoted in respect of their relationships with family, building their own social connections and accessing education. Both children were in full time education. The inspector saw that there were copies of the children's individual education plans on their files and that staff were informed of their education goals.

The children were supported to maintain their relationships with their families. Children's family members and social workers complimented the staff team on the efforts they went to to ensure that family members felt welcome in the service and to help children maintain relationships. Family members were welcome to visit the service and the staff team also supported the children to visit their family homes and to attend family parties and events. Family members spoke of how they are enabled to be involved in the care of their children through, for example, being responsible for their hair care or preparing food in the centre. One family member commented that "all these small things play a huge role".

Social workers were also supported to visit the children and the inspector saw that records of Child in Care Reviews were maintained for the children. These were attended by the person in charge and other key representatives. The inspector saw that these reviews reflected that the service was meeting the children's assessed needs.

The inspector reviewed the daily notes for each child across several selected weekends from October 2025 to May 2026. It was evident that children were supported to access a range of personally-meaningful and age appropriate activities. For example, in October the children went trick-or-treating in their local neighbourhood and one child attended a Halloween experience. Children went to the local shops to buy ice-creams and were supported to attend a local club for children with disabilities. Day trips in March and April 2026 were to local playgrounds and parks. One child enjoyed going to the library on public transport. Children also visited museums, aquariums and themes parks and both were, at the time of inspection, taking part in a football club.

Judgment: Compliant

Regulation 17: Premises

The premises of the centre was designed and laid out in a manner which was suitable to meet the children's assessed needs. The centre provided for children's mobility needs and provided space, both indoors and outdoors, for children to play. Each child had their own bedroom which was personalised. The sitting room contained plenty of toys and safe spaces for children with mobility needs to engage in floor play. A well-maintained kitchen provided hygienic cooking facilities and a

large, accessible bathroom was suitable to meet the personal care needs of the children.

The centre was very clean, warm and homely. Furniture and fittings were clean and well-maintained. Child-friendly and age-appropriate decor was in place and children's photographs decorated the communal walls.

Judgment: Compliant

Regulation 18: Food and nutrition

Children living in this centre received nutrition and hydration through both oral and non-oral means. There was clear guidance, as informed by the relevant multidisciplinary professionals, available on each child's plan to guide staff in meeting their nutritional needs in a safe manner. Staff spoken with were very informed of these care plans and described to the inspector how they provided nutrition, hydration and medication to children. Social workers spoken with complimented the staff team on their commitment to progressing with children's goals to have more oral tastes and meals in line with their care plans.

Staff members told the inspector that they had training in percutaneous endoscopic gastrostomy (PEG) and the inspector saw that non-oral feeds were provided in a hygienic and dignified manner.

There was good quality, fresh food available in the centre including fresh meat, dairy products and fruit. Food was stored hygienically and was labelled when opened. A menu plan for the week showed the meals available. Children had choice in respect of their meals. The inspector saw that a meal prepared on the day of inspection looked and smelled appetising. Staff were available to support the child with their meal and the meal was seen to be a pleasant and engaging experience.

Judgment: Compliant

Regulation 20: Information for residents

A residents' guide was available in the centre. This was written in an easy-to-read format. It set out information on the service including the facilities, how to make a complaint and the procedure for accessing HIQA reports.

Judgment: Compliant

Regulation 27: Protection against infection

The centre was very clean and well-maintained and it was evident that the service was complying with the National Standards for Infection Prevention and Control in community services. The provider had an up-to-date policy in respect of infection prevention and control (IPC) along with a provider level contingency plan to be implemented in the event of an outbreak of a transmissible infection. All staff members were up-to-date with IPC training.

There were suitable hand hygiene facilities throughout the service and staff were seen engaging in good hand hygiene practices. Staff were knowledgeable of standard precautions to be taken in the delivery of care. There were suitable cleaning materials and products including, for example, alginate bags and staff were informed of how to correctly use these.

Individual risk assessments were in place on each child's file to guide staff in managing any possible transmissible infection which may present. A staff member spoken with was informed of these control measures and of the arrangements to contact the provider for further guidance in the event of an outbreak of infection.

Judgment: Compliant

Regulation 5: Individual assessment and personal plan

The inspector reviewed both children's individual assessments and care plans. Each child had an up-to-date assessment, informed by the multidisciplinary team and other relevant stakeholders. The assessment reflected children's needs and was used to inform comprehensive care plans. The care plans provided clear guidance to staff in meeting these needs and also were written in a manner which reflected children's preferences in respect of their care. Staff members spoken with were informed of care plans, and the inspector saw that care was delivered in a manner which ensured children's rights were being upheld.

Children had access to a wide range of multidisciplinary supports, both from the provider's multidisciplinary team and external health professionals. These included, for example, psychiatry, occupational therapy, speech and language therapy and dietitians. Children's daily notes reflected that they had regular access to these professionals. Staff were informed of particular assessment reports and care plans; for example, a child's communication care plan and a plan to introduce oral tastes to another child.

Judgment: Compliant

Regulation 7: Positive behavioural support

There were a small number of restrictive practices in place in the centre. These included mechanical restrictions such as lap belts and bed sides, to ensure children's safety due to their mobility needs as well as environmental restrictions such as restricted access to sharp knives and chemicals, due to the children's age and developmental needs. These restrictive practices were logged and were reviewed on an annual basis by the provider's restrictive practices committee. Parental consent to restrictive practices was documented and social stories were put in place to inform children of the restrictive practices, the rationale for these and how they impacted on their rights.

One child had a behaviour support plan on their file. This was written by relevant multidisciplinary professionals and provided guidance to staff in implementing proactive strategies to support the child to have their best day. The inspector saw that these strategies were utilised by the staff team. For example, the behaviour support plan recommended using large photographs to support the child to make choices and to have control over their day. The inspector saw that the staff team using photographs regularly to assist the child to make decisions.

Judgment: Compliant

Regulation 8: Protection

The provider had effected measures to protect children from abuse. A child protection policy had been updated in 2025 and a child protection procedure and child safeguarding statement were on display in the centre. All staff had received training in Children First and Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults. Staff members spoken with were informed of their responsibility to safeguard the children in their care. Staff members told the inspector of the reporting arrangements and the procedure to be followed if they had any safeguarding concerns.

Each child had an intimate care plan on their file. This described to staff how to provide care in a rights-informed manner. Staff members told the inspector of how they ensure that children's rights to privacy and dignity are upheld in the provision of intimate care and the inspector saw that staff took care to protect children's privacy at these times.

Judgment: Compliant

Regulation 9: Residents' rights

Children in this centre were in receipt of care and support which was promoting their rights and which was ensuring they were treated with dignity and respect. Staff in this centre had received training in a human rights based approach to care and described to the inspector the measures that they took to uphold and promote children's rights. The inspector saw that care was delivered in a manner which respected children's rights to privacy, dignity and to exercise control and to make choices.

Children's consent to care was sought by staff. Staff members were seen to respect children's rights to decline care at particular times. Staff members sought consent from children to provide care and followed each child's lead to inform the timing of care provided. Children were supported to make age-appropriate decisions in respect of their everyday care, their food and drink and their activities. Their communication rights were upheld and staff were knowledgeable regarding each child's communication system and how to utilise this to support the child to make and communicate decisions.

Children's care status was documented and, when in voluntary care, consent from parents was maintained. Parental consent was also requested for other relevant issues such as taking photographs of the child and restrictive practices.

Throughout the day of the inspection, the inspector observed that care was provided in a respectful, gentle and warm manner which was upholding the rights of each child.

Judgment: Compliant

Appendix 1 - Full list of regulations considered under each dimension

This inspection was carried out to assess compliance with the Health Act 2007 (as amended), the Health Act 2007 (Care and Support of Residents in Designated Centres for Persons (Children and Adults) with Disabilities) Regulations 2013, and the Health Act 2007 (Registration of Designated Centres for Persons (Children and Adults) with Disabilities) Regulations 2013 (as amended) and the regulations considered on this inspection were:

Regulation Title	Judgment
Capacity and capability	
Registration Regulation 5: Application for registration or renewal of registration	Compliant
Regulation 14: Persons in charge	Compliant
Regulation 15: Staffing	Compliant
Regulation 16: Training and staff development	Compliant
Regulation 22: Insurance	Compliant
Regulation 23: Governance and management	Compliant
Regulation 3: Statement of purpose	Compliant
Quality and safety	
Regulation 12: Personal possessions	Compliant
Regulation 13: General welfare and development	Compliant
Regulation 17: Premises	Compliant
Regulation 18: Food and nutrition	Compliant
Regulation 20: Information for residents	Compliant
Regulation 27: Protection against infection	Compliant
Regulation 5: Individual assessment and personal plan	Compliant
Regulation 7: Positive behavioural support	Compliant
Regulation 8: Protection	Compliant
Regulation 9: Residents' rights	Compliant