

€350k for the owners of Prime Time probe creche

THE two creche owners behind a firm at the centre of an RTÉ Prime Time investigation alleging mistreatment of children have paid themselves a total of €350,000 in the past two years.

In 2013, the Links Abington creche in Malahide was the subject of the RTÉ Prime Time documentary, *Breach of Trust*.

In 2015, the firm that operates the creche, Links Creche & Montessori Ltd, was fined €1,000 at Dublin District Court after pleading guilty to eight charges over incidents in 2013.

The court heard that during February and March of that year, a toddler was shouted at after she soiled herself.

Another child was pushed to

By **Gordon Deegan**

the floor, while on a later date a child was 'slammed in a chair and shouted at for trying to feed herself'.

Last year, at the High Court, settlements totalling more than €1million were approved for 22 children in cases arising out of the RTÉ documentary.

The 22 children had sued Links Creche and Montessori Ltd, with offices in Rathmines, Dublin, and its sister firm, Links Creche Southside Ltd, Kinsealy, Dublin, along with the creche owners Deirdre and Pádraig Kelly of Myra Manor, Kinsealy, over alleged mistreatment at the Links Abington facility.

Now, new accounts for Links Creche and Montessori Ltd show that the firm's two directors, Deirdre and Pádraig Kelly, paid themselves a joint total of €175,000 last year and €175,000 in 2015.

The Kellys continue to run a thriving business in spite of the fallout from the RTÉ probe judging from the total of 173 employees on their books.

The combined wage bill for the two firms last year, including the cost of directors' pay, last year totalled €3.26million.

In the 12 months to October last, Links Creche & Montessori Ltd's made profits of €449,643, while Links Creche Southside Ltd had a profit of €129,805.

Dr Mark Dooley



MORAL MATTERS

No amount of darkness can stop the sun shining within

THESE are the dying days of summer, the last light before the early dusk. It is the last growth before the fall, the sun having grown weaker in the sky. The world is turning and we are moving with it.

The children are gearing up for school, the holidays are almost over and we are 'getting back to normal'.

Life falls from the trees as the last rose of summer smiles from the tired soil. Soon, it will smile no more. Everything ends. What is given is always taken away. The rose smiles, bows and, then, the end. 'If all the year were playing holidays, to sport would be as tedious as to work', says Shakespeare. We know it is true, and yet we don't want them to end. We don't want to get back to normal.

There is nothing 'normal' about life. Simply to open your eyes is to reveal the miracles of a world that comes to life through us. We see this more clearly when the burdens have been lifted and we break from normality. It is like the picture hanging on your wall. Most of the time, you don't even see it. It hangs there unnoticed - a gap in the fabric of time to which you have become blind.

But then, one day, it catches your eye. You don't merely stare at it: you look deep into it. You see beyond the materials into the world it opens up - a world in which you can savour the sounds and scents of a scene out of time.

They sit in the gallery absorbed by the painting. They are not studying the texture of the canvas or its colours. They are having an encounter with something extraordinary, something which speaks to them from another sphere.

Getting back to normal means leaving that experience behind. The painting on your wall reverts to being an unseen ornament. The garden, the rose, the children at play - all of it drifts away into forgotten dreams.

The world turns and we turn away from those things which give depth and meaning to life.

As the drapes descend earlier each evening, we close our eyes to the wonder. Isn't that what getting back to normal means? My eldest

son goes to secondary school for the first time tomorrow. For us, the end of the holidays signals a new beginning. Like so many parents, I live in fear of what the future holds. I know it is time for him and his brothers to get back to normal. Children require structure and routine. But it is not something I can ever look forward to.

The times we spend together doing nothing, the little trips here and there, the late bedtimes - this is the splendid tapestry of life.

At journey's end, when the drapes finally fall for the final time, we won't gaze back on the so-called 'normal' periods of our lives. We shall long to recall the last rose of summer, the children laughing together in the garden, the quiet times together. Like the painting you only see when you make time to look, the tapestry of life is not something you simply stare at.

It is something that beckons us beyond the frontiers of 'ordinary time'. And, as you look deeper, you hear the distant sound of laughter, smell the rose, sense the love.

EVERYTHING ends, but art captures and saves what would otherwise be forgotten. It brings everything back to life and allows us to kiss and love and live again. By gazing at the tapestry, the little moments are reanimated with a spirit of joyful longing.

The world is turning and soon we shall be back to the grind. Autumn will come, the days will diminish and we shall resume the old routine. But no amount of darkness can stop the sun shining from that gateway to heaven which hangs upon your wall.

In pictures, we see life without end. So long as the painting exists, so, too, does the world it contains. It hangs there as a constant reminder of how we should live.

Saying goodbye to summer, to the long school holidays, to our little ones as they brave the storm, does not mean that we should return to 'normal'. If life is a work of art, we should simply keep on painting. The tapestry of this beautiful existence is never complete until the last brushstroke.

Even then, there is no cause to cry, for now the rose cannot die.

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