

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015CC098
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Name of Service:	Circle Time Montessori Ltd
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Address of Service:	Whitechurch & Waterloo Community Centre, Whitechurch, Co. Cork
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Eircode:	T34RR58
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Name of Registered Provider:	Dawn Moore
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Service type:	Part Time, Sessional
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Date(s) of Inspection:	20/09/2023
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No of pre-school children:	AM	20	PM	8
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Admin Building, St Marys Health Campus, Cork, T23x440
Inspection undertaken by:	C Stokes
Title:	Early Years Inspector

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	N/A
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Description of service

This part- time and sessional service is located in a community centre in a rural setting. A service is provided to children aged between two years and eight months to 5 years. A registered school age service is also provided. The premises is two-storey building with one playroom downstairs and one playroom upstairs. An enclosed outdoor area is available. The ethos of the setting is Montessori and play based with an emphasis on outdoor play.

Staffing

The registered provider is not always service based but was working directly with children on the day of inspection. Four other adults comprised the staff team. All adults were suitably qualified.

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 unannounced and focused on the area of governance/ health, welfare and development of child/ safety/ premises and facilities. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

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 inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, 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.*

(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 registered provider ensured there was a named person in charge of operating the service.
- (b) In addition, the registered provider was the named deputy person in charge. Both were present on the day of inspection and one or other are always on the premises according to the registered provider.
- (c) There was a clear management structure in place, and this was displayed on the downstairs noticeboard.
- (2) The staff recruitment files were examined as part of this inspection.
- (a) When the recruitment files of all 5 adults was reviewed two written and appropriately validated references were available in respect of 7 past employers
- (b) Two written and appropriately validated references were available in respect of 3 reputable sources.
- (c) A completed record of Garda vetting disclosure from the National Vetting Bureau was available for the 5 adults.
- (d) Police vetting required and available for 2 adults who had lived outside the jurisdiction for a period exceeding 6 months.
- (4) A certificate of a major award in Early Childhood care and education at QQI level 5, 6, 7 and 8 on the National Qualification framework was on file for the adults.

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 registered provider ensured that an adequate number of adults were working directly with the children.
- (2) The two rooms which were in operation met the adult/child ratio of 1 to 11 in the morning and 1 to 8 adults to children in the part time hours.

Room	Age range	adults	children
Upstairs ECCE	2 years 8 months -5 years	2 morning	12
Downstairs ECCE	2 years 8 months -5 years	1 morning	8
		1 afternoon	8

- (8 (a) The registered provider ensured that at least 2 adults are on the premises at all times. While 8 children were attending on a part time basis with 1 adult, a second adult was available on the premises.

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

Compliance Information

Basic Needs

- Meals and snacks were served at 10.45am and 1.15pm and water/drinks were observed to be readily available.
- Most children in the preschool rooms were independent using the toilet and staff supported these children appropriately, with gentle reminders for handwashing. Staff were sensitive to the needs of the children who were not fully trained and supported these children as necessary.
- The staff advised that children in the preschool room downstairs attending on a part time basis do not have a sleep routine but can rest as required and stackable beds are available.
- Children in both rooms were observed to have access to the outdoor area for mobility on the day of inspection.

- There was a calm and engaging atmosphere in both rooms. Staff were observed to interact in a caring manner with the children building their sense of safety and security in the setting.

Supporting relationships around children:

- The registered provider advised the inspector that the service operated in partnership with parents, with an online application to send information for the parents and communication in person with parents at handover times. In addition, the service has an open- door policy with parents, an open day for prospective parents and advises parents weekly of the curriculum plan each Monday for the week ahead.
- The setting communicates the observation records of the children’s interests and progress with parents/guardians.
- There is a key worker system in place. The key workers completed the regular observations on the children and contributed to the emergent curriculum based around the children’s expressed interests. These interests link in with and inform the activities and themes of the month.
- The adults were observed to show positive regard for the children on the day of inspection, with encouragement and praise for specific tasks in a warm and caring manner for example during tidy up/transition times where nurturing and enthusiastic interactions were observed.
- The setting is integrated with the local community particularly the onsite and local school communities.

Physical and Material Environment

- Both rooms in operation were child friendly, bright, and spacious and laid out in special interest areas with materials largely accessible to the children.
- Interest areas included mark making, painting, library, home corner, Montessori materials, construction. Dress up materials rotated between the rooms. A nature table was in place for children to stock. Pictures of family and the community were at children’s eye level.
- Child sized tables and chairs were available in each room.
- Childrens artwork was on display at children’s eye level.
- The outdoor area was spacious and had interest areas including a sandpit, playhouse, climbing, teepee, mud kitchen, digger sand pit, music wall, basketball, balance scales, picnic benches and a shed for storage.
- In addition, the service has the use of the indoor hall for physical activity in inclement weather.

Programme of Activities

- The service offered a play-based curriculum and playful opportunities were supported throughout the early learning and care programme.
- The setting was based around the Montessori ethos of a prepared learning environment to facilitate play based on the child’s emerging interests. There was a strong emphasis on play and language development rather than the use of Montessori materials in the upstairs room due to the age range of the children in attendance according to the registered provider who described using rhyme, storytelling, and flashcards to promote language development.
- The children’s observations captured how the adults intended to incorporate and extend the children’s interests into the planned programme of activities.
- A timetable was on display in the room showing the different activities in the session. Upstairs, free play, circle time, snack time and outdoor play was observed. In the downstairs room yoga was observed on the day of inspection.
- The outdoor programme offered extensive opportunities for children to play and learn outdoors. Outdoor play was a feature of the service, and it was well utilised to support children’s participation and opportunities to play and learn in the outdoors. Children’s choices were supported, and staff actively engaged in listening to children.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 20 – Facilities for rest and play

(1) *Subject to this regulation, a registered provider shall ensure that-*

(b) *there are adequate and suitable facilities for a pre-school child to rest during the day*

Compliance Information

- (1) (b) There were adequate and suitable rest facilities provided for children. There was a supply of stackable beds to accommodate the sleep/ rest needs of children attending on a part-time basis for up to 5 hours a day. In addition, there was blankets and linen available.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 22 – Food and drink

A registered provider shall ensure that adequate and suitable, nutritious and varied food and drink is available for each pre-school child attending the pre-school service.

Compliance Information

- The service provided meals and snacks in accordance with sessional and part-time day-care guidelines.
- A fridge is in place for the storage of perishable snacks and meals.
- The registered provider outlined that parents/guardians provide all the food and were advised of the services healthy eating guidelines.
- Food observed on the day of inspection included wraps, crackers, sandwiches, fruit, cheese, and yoghurts. The food observed was suitable, nutritious, varied and balance.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 26 - Fire safety measures

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of-

(a) any fire drill that takes place in the premises, and

(b) the number, type and maintenance record of fire fighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises.

(4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of fire shall be displayed in a conspicuous position in the premises.

Compliance Information

- (1) (a) The registered provider ensured that a record was kept of the fire drills, the most recent drill was dated 18 September 2023.
- (b) The registered provider ensured that a record was kept of the firefighting equipment. The service record indicated the fire extinguishers were maintained on 16 March 2023 and the fire alarm service record indicated they were serviced/ maintained on the 10 October 2022.
- (4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire was on display on the fire doors.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

*A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-
 (e) equipped with adequate and suitable sanitary facilities.*

Compliance Information

(e) The service was equipped with adequate and suitable sanitary facilities. There were 4 children’s toilets and sinks in place and 1 adult toilet and sink on the premises. This was sufficient for the numbers of children and adults attending.