

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015FL307
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Name of Service:	The Learning Circle
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Address of Service:	37 Myrtle Drive, The Coast, Baldoyle, Dublin 13, Co. Dublin
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Eircode:	D13 X2N4
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Name of Registered Provider:	Michelle Murphy
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	31/03/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	55	PM	49
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Child and Family Agency, Dublin Northeast, Second Floor, Unit 4&5 Nexus Building Block 6A, Blanchardstown Corporate Park, Dublin
Inspection undertaken by:	E Hosford and Á Dunne
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

The Learning Circle is a private service which provides a sessional, part time and full-time service to children aged from birth to 6 years and is registered to operate from 7:30am to 6:15pm Monday to Friday but is currently operating from 8am to 6pm. The service also provides a school age service.

The service operates from a purpose built two storey premises on the north side of Dublin city and was operating five care rooms for early years children and one care room for school age children. The rooms were as follows: Panda 1 and Panda 2 Room (2-3 years), Baby /Penguin Room (1-2 years), Monkey Room (3-4 years), Tigers room (4-5 years) and the Dolphin Room for school age children. A separate sleep room is situated on the ground floor beside the Penguin Room and has five standard cots. An enclosed outdoor area is available to the children at the rear of the premises and a soft playroom on the first floor.

Staffing

The service employs 29 staff including the registered provider, designated person in charge, deputy person in charge, two cooks, and administrative assistant, a maintenance person, 3 staff who work with the school age children and 19 early childcare staff. The registered provider does not work directly with the children 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

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This inspection was unannounced and focused on the area of governance, health, welfare and development of child, safety, premises and facilities under regulations 9,11,16,19,23,26, 28 and 29. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required. A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 16 and 29.

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

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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 deputy person in charge, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection and facilitated 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.

(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) The files of six new staff members employed in the service since the last inspection were reviewed during the inspection.

(a) Six validated written references were available from a past employer.

(b) Six validated written references were available from a source other than a past employer.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures were available for 6 new staff members along with five renewed Garda vetting disclosures for current staff. The service demonstrated their adherence to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) Documentary evidence showed that five adults had lived outside of the state for six months or more as adults and international police vetting from five states were available for inspection.

(4) Five staff employed since the last inspection and working directly with the early years children 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 eligible by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth Affairs.

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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) There were an adequate number of adults working directly with the children as there were 13 adults staff working directly with 55 children aged between 0-6 years in the morning and 11 staff working with 49 children in the afternoon. Two additional staff members were available to help across the care rooms during the operation of the service.

(2) The correct adult/child ratio was maintained in the service throughout the inspection at all times.

Panda 1 Room: 2 adults caring for 8 children aged between 2-3 years in the morning and 2 adults caring for 6 children in the afternoon.

Panda 2 Room: 3 adults caring for 12 children aged between 2-3 years in the morning and 2 adults with 12 children in the afternoon.

Baby/Penguin Room: 3 adults caring for 8 children aged between 1-2 years in the morning and 7 children in the afternoon.

Monkey Room: 3 adults caring for 13 children aged between 3-4 years in the morning and 2 adults caring for 12 children in the afternoon.

Tigers Room: 2 adults caring for 14 children aged between 4-5 years in the morning and 12 children in the afternoon.

(8)(a) On discussion with staff and on review of staff sign in sheets it was confirmed that of the service roster it was confirmed that two adults were present on the premises at all times

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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:

- (h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis;*
- (i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;*
- (j) details of any medication administered to a pre-school child attending the service with signed parental consent;*
- (k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.*

Compliance Information

(1) (i) A record was available and maintained of the staff present in the service and their hours of work.

Non-Compliance Information

- (1)
- (h) Staff in the Panda 2 room did not maintain a record of the children present in their room on the day of inspection up to 12pm or the previous day. It is acknowledged that attendance was completed after the inspector requested the attendance record.
- (j) On review of 14 administration of medication records for children in the service, the following information was not recorded.
- Three records did not include the child's date of birth, and one record did not have the child's surname documented.
- (k) On review of 17 accident and incident records the following information was not recorded.
- One form did not include the child's date of birth.
 - Two records did not include the parent's signature while four forms did not include the date the parent signed the form.
 - The manager's signature and date were not recorded on one form.

Full records, including signatures and dates must be maintained

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

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(1)(h)(i)(j)(k)

In response to the non-compliances the registered provider has stated that findings of the inspection were discussed with all staff. The importance of record keeping was emphasised. This was followed by an email to outline non-compliances on receipt of report. Management will not sign accident/incident forms until they are correctly completed. Medicine forms to be checked weekly.

Supporting documentation submitted

(1)(h)(i)(j)(k)

Copy of document sent to staff and management outlining further actions required

Summary Comment

The actions and evidence submitted by the registered provider regarding Regulation 16 were reviewed and accepted by the inspectorate

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

(1)(a)

Basic Needs:

- The service provided the children with a morning snack which was observed to be in keeping with their service healthy eating policy. The children were given yogurts and sliced banana with water to drink. A hot meal at lunch time of pasta and lentils bolognese tomato sauce with grated cheese was provided with water to drink. Children attending the Monkey and Tiger rooms had a morning snack from home which was observed to consist of yogurts, cheese, fruit, crackers and sandwiches. Afternoon snack was observed to be fruit, crème fresh and breadsticks. Mealtimes were a sociable occasion with staff and children sitting together while they ate their food in a relaxed and comfortable environment.
- Staff members were observed to be kind and attentive in their interactions with the children and

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the atmosphere in the service was warm and child centred.

- The children were observed using the toilet under supervision, with assistance provided by a staff member when necessary.
- Children were observed moving freely within the care rooms and outdoor area and taking a break from activities and relaxing in a rest area when required.

Physical and Material Environment:

- The care rooms were colourful, bright and welcoming areas with play resources accessible, organised and stored on shelving which allowed the children to select and replace materials and each area was furnished with low level tables and chairs which facilitated tabletop activities and arts and crafts.
- Artwork on display demonstrated activities completed by the children for example; bunnies , eggs, carrots and a handprint alphabet.
- Areas of interest within the rooms included a home area, art space, construction area, along with tabletop and small world activities. All were suitably equipped with supporting equipment to enable the children to explore and create learning and play opportunities.
- The outdoor area was enclosed with walls and tall gates. The surface area consisted of cement and soft tiles. Equipment included climbing frames, three- and four-wheel bikes and cars, balance beams and scooters.

Supporting Relationships

- Staff members were observed demonstrating sensitivity and responsiveness to each child's individual needs, likes and preferences, and frequently initiated conversations with the children, responded meaningfully to their verbal and non-verbal cues and provided regular praise and encouragement using a gentle tone of voice.
- The children were encouraged by the adults to take turns with their friends and share equipment and toys. Children were observed eagerly participating in the preparation for circle time following their morning snack.
- Staff members were familiar with the children's parents who could speak with staff at drop off and collection. The service engaged with parents via text message which updated them on planned activities, pictures of the children throughout the day and information regarding the service and upcoming events.

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- Staff worked well together in supporting the children and were aware of their roles and responsibilities regarding maintaining flexibility with the daily routine to ensure the care was child led

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:

- Entry into the service was managed by staff via a locked door and bell and the outdoor area was adequately secured to prevent an unsupervised child from exiting and an unauthorised adult from entering.
- Cleaning materials were stored out of children's reach in locked cupboards

Infection Control:

- The environment and care rooms were visually clean and maintained with staff completing cleaning schedules daily

Administration of Medication:

- A system was in place for the daily administration of medication to a child that included signed parental pre consent, named medication stored in a named box out of children's reach and documentation completed on the administration of the medication

Safe Sleep:

- Children were facilitated to sleep in cots, contour beds and stackable beds. Suitable bed linen was provided for each child and stored in named bags. Children were supervised by staff while they slept.
- Staff members maintained accurate 10-minute sleep checks on each child to include their colour, breathing and position. The temperature of the cot room and care rooms at sleep time were also recorded as between the recommended 18 °C – 22 °C.
- One child under the age of two years slept on a low contour bed, completed sleep plans were available as required by Tusla Safe Sleep Guidelines

Fire Safety:

- The designated fire exits were illuminated and clear of any obstructions throughout the inspection

Non-Compliance Information

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General Safety:

1. An electric cable was positioned beside a cot in the cot room. This increased the potential risk of harm to a child. It is acknowledged that no child slept in the cot during the inspection.

Infection Control:

2. The infection control practices observed in the service were at variance with the service policy and best practice guidelines. For example.
 - The children in the Panda 1 room did not have their hands washed before lunch.
 - Warm water, paper towels and a pedal bin were not available in the upstairs sanitary facilities used by the Tiger room.
 - Toilet roll and paper towels were not stored in a dispenser in the downstairs sanitary facilities used by the Panda 2 and Monkey rooms.

Fire Safety:

3. Documentation available demonstrated that fire drills are not completed in the service monthly. This reduces the effective evacuation of staff and children in the event of an emergency.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. In response to the non-compliance the service has stated that the radio was removed from the room on the day of inspection and that staff were all reminded about the importance of care and attention needed with electrical wires/cords.

Infection Control:

2. In response to the non-compliances the service has stated that
 - The sink in the panda room was made more available to children and hands are washed regularly. A plumber was called out to inspect the system, and work was carried out to ensure warm water is always available.
 - New bins have been ordered and placed in bathroom with no bin and bins not working replaced.
 - Staff again were spoken to about monitoring the availability of paper towels/ toilet roll in bathrooms. A dedicated staff member will check all bathrooms for supplies.

Fire Safety:

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3. In response to the non-compliance the service has stated that a fire drill was completed the evening of the inspection. They have changed the structure of who is responsible for the fire drills

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

1. Copy of document sent to staff.

Infection Control:

2. Invoice for new bins and staff update on the inspection findings and their responsibilities.

Fire Safety:

3. Evidence of last two fire drills completed in service and the reminder sent to staff and to managers.

Summary Comment

The actions and evidence submitted by the registered provider regarding Regulation 23 were reviewed and accepted by the inspectorate.

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 last recorded fire drill that took place in the service was on the 6 February 2026.

(b) The number, type and maintenance of the smoke alarms and fire extinguishers was present in the service.

Records available demonstrated that both were serviced on the 14 November 2025.

(4)

A notice of the fire procedures to be followed in the event of an emergency were clearly displayed in the care rooms and hallways of the service

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Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

A registered provider shall ensure that the pre-school service is adequately insured.

Compliance Information

An insurance certificate was available and demonstrated that adequate insurance was available for the number of children accommodated in the sessional service with an expiry date of 27 March 2027.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-
(d) cleaned, maintained and repaired, as required, and

Compliance Information

(d) The service and care rooms were observed to be clean and maintained during the inspection.