

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015KE103		
Name of Service:	Circle of Friends		
Address of Service:	Hartwell Upper Kill Co. Kildare		
Eircode:	W91 DX82		
Name of Registered Provider:	Frances Mair		
Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional		
Date of Inspection:	16/08/2023		
No of pre-school children:	AM	17	PM 17
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate Child and Family Agency Suite 7, Vista Primary Care Centre Ballymore Eustace Road Naas Co. Kildare, W91 X38W		
Inspection undertaken by:	F. Maher		
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	Not applicable
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Description of service

Circle of Friends is one of two privately owned childcare services operated by the registered provider in Kill and Sallins Co. Kildare. Full day, part time and sessional care and education is provided to children from 1-6 years of age. The service opens Monday-Friday from 07:30am-18:00pm and is also registered to provide school aged childcare.

The service is located in an adapted bungalow outside the village of Kill Co. Kildare. Five pre-school rooms, a sleep room, kitchen and office are provided. A play area is available to the rear of the premises.

Staffing

There were eleven staff members employed in the service including the registered provider. Seven people were present in the service on the day of inspection, this included the registered provider who was supernumerary and available to provide relief if required, four staff members working directly with pre-school children and two staff members responsible for the care of school age children.

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 and safety. The inspections 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, 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.

(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

(1)(a),(b)

There was a designated person in charge and a named person to deputise as required.

The records of 11 staff members employed and/or present in the service were reviewed.

(2)(a),(b)

Twenty two written and verified past employer references or references from a reputable source, in the absence of a past employer, were available in respect of all adults employed in the service.

(c)

Garda Vetting disclosures were available for all employed staff members.

(d)

Police vetting was in place for two staff members who had lived in a state other than the State for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months.

(3)

The procedures specified in paragraph (2) had been completed prior to any person being appointed, assigned or allowed access to or contact with a child attending the pre-school service.

(4)

Eight members of staff employed and who work directly with the children whose records were reviewed held a major award at Level 5 or higher in Early Childhood Care and Education on the National Qualifications Framework. One staff member was in possession of a letter of eligibility to practice issued by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY).

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 17 children attending the service being supervised directly by four adults, the registered provider was available to provide relief to the care rooms as required.

(2)
The minimum ratio of adults to children was adhered to during the day as specified in column (3) of Part 1 of Schedule 6.

(8)(a)
There were at least two adults on the premises at all times for the duration of the inspection; this was verified by the weekly staff roster.

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

The main hot meal served was spaghetti bolognese and was provided by an outside catering company that was reheated onsite, the morning snack served included fresh fruit pieces and crackers and water was freely available in each pre-school room throughout the day.

Younger children had their nappies changed regularly and as needed during the day. Stackable beds were available for any older children should they require a period of sleep while attending on a full day care or part-time basis. The sleep and rest needs of the younger children were accommodated on an individual basis; this was facilitated by enough standard cots for children under two years of age.

All children enjoyed freedom of movement in the pre-school rooms and in the outdoor play area.

Physical and material environment

The preschool rooms were equipped with age appropriate low level tables and chairs allowing the children to sit comfortably for meals and tabletop activities. Each room had a rest area with either a small couch or floor mats and cushions. Other areas of interest in the pre-school rooms included kitchen/home corners, libraries and sand/water play areas. Material and resources included plenty of art and craft materials for painting, cutting, sticking and colouring and the kitchen areas were resourced with associated props. In the younger rooms push/pull equipment and rockers entertained the children along with materials for messy play activities, books, cars, trucks and puzzles.

The outside play area to the rear was equipped with a mud kitchen and utensils, rocker, tyres, playhouses, a large plastic climbing frame and a large wall mounted chalk board with chalk. The play surface was soft pour and suitable to enable the children use the various ride on equipment available. A large, covered area ensured children were protected during inclement weather.

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 main entrance door to the service was secure and controlled with a bell entry system; this was controlled by staff to prevent children from exiting the service unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the pre-school. The service met the necessary safety requirements in respect of the indoor environment, toys and equipment and safe storage of cleaning agents. Daily indoor and outdoor risk assessments were completed.

Infection Control:

The premises was maintained in a clean and hygienic condition and cleaning schedules were completed by the staff in each room on a daily basis. Children's hands were washed before eating, following toilet use, nappy changing, outdoor and messy play. There was a supply of thermostatically controlled hot water, liquid hand soap and paper towel at all sinks to support hygienic hand washing and foot pedal operated bins were available for the safe disposal of used paper hand towel, tissues and soiled nappies. Plastic aprons, disposable gloves and nappy sacks were in place for hygienic nappy changing practices which were observed carried out in line with the service nappy change policy. Bed linen was individual to each child and laundered weekly. A system was in place for the sterilisation of soothers in the Wobbler room.

Administration of Medication:

Medication was not given at the time of the inspection and in conversation with staff members, they were aware of the procedures to be followed to administer medicine safely to a child if required while attending the service.

Safe Sleep:

One sleep room with a total of four standard cots was in place for children less than 2 years of age requiring sleep. Sufficient low-level sleep beds were available for all children aged over 2 years requiring a period of sleep while attending the service on a part time or full time basis. The staff members were familiar with current safe sleep guidance and practice to reduce the risk of sudden infant death and advised that 10-minute sleep check observations were completed on all sleeping children and the staff documented the colour, position and breathing pattern of sleeping children in their care. The environmental temperature of the sleep room was maintained between 16°-20° Celsius.

Fire Safety:

Regular monthly fire drills were carried out and records maintained. All fire exits were easily identifiable and unobstructed.

Outing:

An outings policy is in place to manage the safety of children when on an outing from the service.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 24 - Checking in and out and record of attendance

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that each pre-school child attending the service is checked in and out of the service by an employee or an unpaid worker.

(3) A registered provider shall ensure that-

(a) no person other than-

(i) pre-school child attending the service,

(ii) a person dropping or collecting such a child,

(iii) an employee, or

(iv) an unpaid worker, can enter the premises without his or her entry being approved by an employee, and

(b) a daily record in writing is kept of the entry on the premises of any such person.

(4) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing referred to in paragraph (3)(b) is retained for a period of one year from the date to which it relates.

Compliance Information

(1)

The registered provider ensured that each child was checked in and out of the service. This was confirmed by the written attendance records maintained in each care room.

(3) (a),(b)

The person in charge ensured that any person entering the service was approved and a record in writing was maintained.

(4)

The person in charge confirmed that the records were retained in storage for the required period.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 25 - First aid

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that a person trained in first aid for children is, at all times, immediately available to the children attending the pre-school service.

(2) A registered provider shall ensure that a suitably equipped first aid box for children-

(a) is safely stored in an easily accessible and conspicuous position on the premises, and

(b) is available to the children attending the pre-school service at all times.

Compliance Information

(1)

Persons trained in first aid response were immediately available to the children attending the service.

(2)(a)(b)

The first aid equipment was safely stored and in conspicuous positions in each pre-school room and were at all times available to the children attending the pre-school service.

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)

A written record was available of fire drills completed in the service. The last recorded fire drill was recorded on 6 July 2023.

(b)

Records were kept of the maintenance of the firefighting and the smoke alarm system in the premises which was last serviced March 2023 and August 2023 respectively.

(4)

A notice of the procedure to be followed in the event of a fire was displayed in the service.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 27 – Supervision

A registered provider shall ensure that pre-school children attending the service are supervised at all times.

Compliance Information

Children were observed being supervised by the adults caring for them at all times both indoors and in the outdoor areas.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

There was evidence of current insurance cover valid until 27 March 2024. The insurance provided cover for 50 children.