

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015KE104
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Name of Service:	Circle of Friends
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Address of Service:	Canal View, Sallins, Co. Kildare
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Eircode:	W91 K162
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Name of Registered Provider:	Frances Mair
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Service type:	Full Day
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Date of Inspection:	26/11/2025
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No of pre-school children:	AM	31	PM	14
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Suite 7, Vista Primary Care, Ballymore Eustace Rd, Naas, Co Kildare
Inspection undertaken by:	R. Brien & M. Bermingham
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).

Conditions if applicable	N/A
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Description of service

Circle of Friends is one of two services operated by the registered provider and provides full day and sessional care to children aged 2 to 6 years. The service is registered to operate from 07:30 to 18:00, Monday to Friday. Sessional care is provided from 09:00 to 12:00 and from 09:15 to 12:15.

The service operates from an adapted bungalow in Sallins, Co Kildare. There are four care rooms in the service. Preschool Room 1 caters for children aged 3 to 4 years. Preschool Room 2 and Preschool Room 3 cater for children from 4 to 5 years of age. Preschool Room 4 caters for children aged 2 to 3 years. There is an enclosed outdoor play area to the side and rear of the premises.

Staffing

The service currently employs eight staff members including the registered provider who were all working directly with the children on the day of inspection. The registered provider arrived following the inspector's arrival and was present throughout the remainder of the inspection.

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/ records and safety. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under the following regulations:

- 9 (1)(a)(b),(2)(a)(b)(c),(4) – Management and recruitment,
- 11 (1),(2),(4)(a)(b),(8)(a) – Staffing levels,
- 16 (1)(i)(j)(k) – Record in relation to pre-school service,
- 19 (1)(a)(b) – Health, welfare and development of child,
- 23 – Safeguarding, health, safety and welfare of child,
- 24 (1) – Checking in and out and record of attendance,
- 25 (1),(2) – First aid,
- 26 (1),(4) – Fire safety measures.

These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 19 (1)(a)(b) – Health, welfare and development of child. As a result, the scope of the inspection included Preschool Room 1 and Preschool Room 4.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 24 – Checking in and out and record of attendance. As a result, the scope of the inspection included Preschool Room 1 and Preschool Room 3.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under 23 – Safeguarding, health, safety and welfare of child. As a result, the scope of the inspection included Preschool Room 1, Preschool Room 3, Preschool Room 4 and the outdoor area.

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 inspectors wish 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*

(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*

(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)

The service had a designated person in charge and a named person to deputise as required who were on the premises throughout the inspection.

(2)
The inspection focused on the recruitment records for two staff employed since the last inspection on 08 March 2023. Regulation 9(2)(c) was reviewed in respect of these two adults and six other adults who work in the service. Documentation was reviewed in respect of these adults and met regulatory requirements as follows.

(a)(b)
Of the four validated, written references that were required, three were available from a past employer and one was available from a reputable source.

(c)
Garda vetting disclosures from the National Vetting Bureau of An Garda Síochána were available for the eight adults. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(4)
Records were available evidencing that the two staff members who were employed to work directly with the children held the required qualification or equivalent

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.

(4) Subject to paragraph (5), where a registered provider contemporaneously provides-
(a) a sessional pre-school service, and

(b) a full day care service or a part-time day care service, or both, the minimum ratio of adults to children applicable for the duration of the sessional pre-school service in respect of the children attending that service shall be the ratio specified in paragraph (3).

(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)

An adequate number of adults were working directly with the children at all times during the inspection.

(2)(4)(a)(b)

The minimum ratio of adults to children for full day care services and services that contemporaneously provide a sessional and full day care service were adhered to at all times during the inspection. There were 31 children attending the service being supervised by 5 adults on the morning of inspection.

(8)(a)

There were at least two adults on the premises at all times.

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:

(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

(i)

The staff roster was available on the day of inspection and reflected the adults working in the service.

(j)

Seven medication administration records were available and were reviewed. These records were signed by staff and parents and were completed appropriately.

(k)

Six accident and incidents records were available and were reviewed. These records were signed by staff and parents and were completed appropriately.

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

(b) appropriate and suitable care practices are in place in the pre-school service, having regard to the number of children attending the service and the nature of their needs.

Compliance Information

(1)(a)(b)

The service had a healthy eating policy in place. Children bring a morning snack from home. Children attending on a full day care basis are provided with meals at regular intervals. The main meal is provided by an external catering company. Drinking water was available and accessible to all children throughout the inspection. Dinner was served at 12:45 and children were given a drink of milk with their meal. Staff sat with the children while they were eating their meals.

Children's care needs were observed to be met promptly. Staff were observed supporting children to clean their noses as required and staff were observed changing the clothes of child who had spilled their drink. Children's

independence was supported, staff were observed encouraging children to put on their coats for outdoor play, to feed themselves, and to clean up after their meals and play. Children were supported to use the toilet independently.

Staff demonstrated a good awareness of the needs of each child in their care and responded to children’s cues promptly. Staff demonstrated warmth and sensitivity during their interactions with the children throughout the inspection. Staff provided an appropriate level of supervision whilst supporting the children’s independence during play and mealtimes. Staff were observed to use gentle tones when promoting positive behaviour in line with the service’s behaviour policy. Transitions were managed well within the care rooms and children appeared to be familiar with the daily routine. The atmosphere in the service was calm and relaxed.

Staff described how they communicate with parents daily at arrival and collection times.

The care rooms provided a range of developmentally appropriate play experiences for the children and were adequately resourced with a variety of materials providing children with the freedom to play and explore. Areas of interest included small world toys, construction toys, jigsaws, rest areas with books and home corners. Family photos, birthday displays and children’s artwork were displayed in the care rooms.

The environments were laid out to support the children’s independence. Play materials were observed to be accessible to the children on low level shelving. Low level tables and chairs were available in the care rooms.

An outdoor play area was located to the side and rear of the premises and was divided into 3 sections, one with artificial grass surfacing and two with a shock absorbent surface. A range of developmentally appropriate play equipment was provided in the outdoor play area. Children were dressed appropriately to the weather when using the outdoor area.

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 entrance door to the service was adequately secured to ensure the safety of the children within and to avoid unauthorised persons accessing the service or children exiting unsupervised.
- Cleaning agents were stored safely out of reach of children.
- All storage facilities were inaccessible to children.

Infection Control:

- Liquid soap, warm water and paper towels were available to facilitate hand washing. The children were supported to wash their hands at regular intervals including after nappy changing, after outdoor play and before meals.
- Waste was managed appropriately with the use of pedal bins.
- An infection control policy was in place to inform practice. The premises, equipment and materials appeared clean and maintained in good condition.

Administration of Medication:

- Staff demonstrated, through discussion, that they were familiar with the procedures and practices in place for the administration of medication in line with the services policy on medication administration.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

A number of hazards were identified in the outdoor play area in reach of the children which posed a potential risk of injury to a child as follows:

1. Three screws were observed protruding from the wooden fencing at ground level.
2. A number of nettles were observed in a raised planter which were accessible to the children.
3. Parts of the wooden fencing dividing up the play areas were observed to be water damaged and were splintered and broken in places.

Infection Control:

4. The covering on two couches in Preschool Room 3 was torn exposing the foam within which could not be effectively cleaned.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. The protruding screws in the outdoor play area were removed and replaced. The area was inspected by the manager following completion to ensure there was no remaining risk to children. The outdoor play area will be checked as part of our daily checks to ensure that any needed repairs are identified and addressed promptly.
2. The nettles from the raised planter were removed and disposed of. The area was inspected following removal to ensure it was safe and free from hazardous plants. Staff have been reminded to always check the planting area as part of our daily checks to ensure that any hazardous plants are removed immediately.
3. The damaged section of the fencing dividing the play area has been repaired. The affected timber was cut back and removed, and new treated timber was installed and securely capped. The area was sanded down to ensure it is smooth and free from splinters. Regular maintenance checks will be carried out on the fencing surrounding the play area to ensure it remains safe, secure and free from damage. Any defects identified will be addressed promptly to prevent reoccurrence.

Infection Control:

4. The damaged couches have been removed and replaced with a new couch which is wipeable and compliant with hygiene standards. All classrooms will be checked as part of our daily checks to ensure that any needed repairs or replacements are identified and addressed promptly.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

Photographic evidence was presented to demonstrate the corrective and preventive actions submitted by the registered provider.

Infection Control:

Written and photographic evidence was presented to demonstrate the corrective and preventive actions submitted by the registered provider.

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventive actions as stated by the registered provider have been deemed to address these non-compliances.

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.

Non-Compliance Information

(1)
Documentation reviewed during the inspection evidenced that all preschool children were not checked in and out of the service as required. Attendance records in Preschool Room 1 and Preschool Room 3 room were reviewed by the inspector at 13:00. Four children from Preschool Room 1 who had left the premises at 12:00 and two children from Preschool Room 3 who had left the premises at 12:15 had not been checked out. Inaccurate records of attendance may hinder the safe evacuation of children in the event of an emergency.

This regulation was non-compliant on the last inspection on 08 March 2023. The corrective and preventive actions as stated by the registered provider did not prevent recurrence of this non-compliance.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(1)
All staff have been briefed on the immediate requirement to sign each child in on arrival and sign each child out at the exact time of departure. Staff have been reminded that accurate attendance records are essential for child safety and emergency evacuation. The manager will check the roll books daily to ensure attendance records are accurate and fully complete. The service provider/manager will also carry out unannounced spot checks to ensure all children are signed in on arrival and signed out immediately upon leaving.

Supporting documentation submitted

No supporting documentation submitted.

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventive actions as stated by the registered provider have been deemed to address this non-compliance. These actions will be assessed on the next inspection.

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

(2)

(a) First aid boxes were safely stored in easily accessible and conspicuous locations within the service.

(b) A first aid box was available to the adults and children in the service at all times.

Non-Compliance Information

(1)

A person trained in First Aid Responder (FAR) was not available to the children at all times. The staff roster evidenced that there was no person available to the children with the required FAR training between 17:15 and 18:00 on the day of inspection. This posed a risk to the care, safety and welfare of children in the event of an emergency.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(1)

An additional staff member has successfully completed a FAR training and is rostered onsite daily, including during closing times to ensure compliance. Management will ensure that there is always at least one FAR certified staff member on the premises at all times.

Supporting documentation submitted

Written evidence was presented to demonstrate the corrective and preventive actions submitted by the registered provider.

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventive actions as stated by the registered provider have been deemed to address this non-compliance.

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 detailing monthly fire drills that had taken place in the service. The last fire drill was carried out on the 30 October 2025.
- (b)
- The number, type and maintenance record of firefighting equipment and smoke alarms on the premises was available. There was a record to show that the fire fighting equipment had been serviced on 28 April 2025 and that maintenance of the smoke alarm system had taken place on 26 November 2025.
- (4)
- The procedures to be followed during a fire drill and in the event of a fire were displayed in conspicuous locations within the service.