

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2016CC004				
Name of Service:	Circle Time Montessori Ltd				
Address of Service:	Castletlyons Pipe Band Hall, Castletlyons, Fermoy, Co. Cork				
Eircode:	P61 HF65				
Name of Registered Provider:	Dawn Moore				
Service type:	Sessional				
Date of Inspection:	06/02/2024				
No of pre-school children:	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>AM</td> <td>19</td> <td>PM</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	AM	19	PM	
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	13 Market Square, Mallow, Cork. P51 5DDY				
Inspection undertaken by:	E. Friel				
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

Circle Time Montessori Ltd is a private early years care and education setting providing both Montessori and Play based curricula. The service is registered to accommodate children aged from 2 years to 6 years of age and children currently attending are aged from 2 years 8 months to 6 years of age. There are two sessions; one in the morning from 9.10 am until 12.10 pm and a second session in the afternoon from 1.00 pm until 4.00 pm, both of which facilitate the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme. The service is open Monday to Friday, 38 weeks of the year.

Circle Time Montessori Ltd is located in the small rural village of Castlelyons, East of County Cork. It operates from within the local pipe band hall which has children's sanitary facilities and a kitchen off the main hall. A large secure, partially covered, outdoor area is located at the rear of the service and carparking is available nearby.

Staffing

There are currently three staff employed in the service including one AIM Support Worker and the registered provider. A fourth person is available as a relief worker in the event of staff absence.

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/ 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, 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 was the designated person in charge and a named person was available to deputise.
 - (b) The staff roster evidenced that named persons are available, on the premises, at all times.
 - (c) There was a clear management structure available on the notice board in the service. In conversation staff stated they were aware of their roles and responsibilities.
- (2) The recruitment files of all four adults were available and reviewed;
- (a) There were six references from past employers.
 - (b) There were two references from sources other than past employers.
 - (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for the four adults. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
 - (d) International police vetting was available for three of the four adults who had lived outside of the State for a period of six consecutive months or more as adults.
- (4) Qualification certificates on file, for each adult working directly with the children, indicated that all four adults had obtained a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education, ranging from levels 5 to level 7, on the National Framework of Qualifications.

Non-Compliance Information

- (2)
- (a)(b) All missing validations were received in the office of the inspectorate.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The following statement was received from the registered provider:

- (2)
- (a)(b) All validations have been completed and added to the employee's recruitment files.

Supporting documentation submitted

(2)

(a) (b) All missing validations were received in the office of the inspectorate.

Summary Comment

The non-compliance identified under Regulation 9 (2) (a)(b) has been addressed.

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.

(3) Subject to paragraph (5), a registered provider of a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that at all times the minimum ratio of adults to children specified in column (3) of Part 2 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) therefore at that reference number is satisfied.

Compliance Information

(1) The registered provider ensured that there were, at all times, an adequate number of adults working directly with the children.

(3) The adult/child ratio was met. There were nineteen children in attendance with two adults in the morning session.

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:

- (a) the name, position, qualifications and experience of the person in charge and of every other employee, unpaid worker and contractor;
- (b) details of the class of service and the age profile of children for which the service is registered to provide services;
- (c) details of the adult: child ratios in the service;
- (d) the type of care or programme provided in the service;
- (e) the facilities available;
- (f) the opening hours and fees;
- (g) the policies, procedures and statements the service is required to maintain in accordance with Regulation 10;
- (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.

(3) A record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection on the premises.

Compliance Information

- (a) The name, position, qualifications and experience of the registered provider, deputy and staff were available in each staff member's recruitment file in the service.
- (b) Details of the class of service and the age profile of children for which the service is registered to provide was available on the Tusla certificate displayed on the notice board in the care room.
- (c), (d) (e) & (f) Adults/child ratios, type of care programme, facilities available, opening hours and fees were available in the parent handbook of the service.
- (g) The policies, procedures and statements required under Regulation 10 were available in the service's policies and procedures folder.

- (h) (i) Details of attendance by each early years child and each adult were recorded on a daily basis in the attendance book presented to the inspector.
- (j) Two administration of medication forms were available, both had been signed by staff, management and parents.
- (k) A sample of eleven accident/incident reports were furnished to the inspector, the inspector observed that these had been signed by staff and parents and included the care administered, where required.
- (3) The records referred to in paragraph (1) were open to review by the inspector.

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:

- Snacks, which were provided by parents/guardians, were observed to be healthy and nutritious. Examples included ham rolls, berry fruits, cheese, crackers and yogurt.
- Each child had access to their own individually labelled water bottle throughout the morning. These were stored on a table from which the children could easily gain access to them.
- The children were observed throughout the morning accessing the toilet area individually and in groups. The adults were nearby to provide assistance, if required.
- The weather on the day of cold, damp and wet and the children were noted to be dressed appropriately with warm coats, scarves and hats.
- The inspector observed that each child had individually labelled spare clothing available in the event it was required.
- Staff facilitating children's play were sensitive and responsive in promoting positive behaviours and supported the children to find positive solutions when they experienced challenge in sharing equipment. An example of this was children waiting for a turn of putting balls down the water chute in the outdoor

play area and staff reminding children they need to wait until a child is finished before they can have their turn.

SUPPORTING CHILDREN'S RELATIONSHIPS:

- In conversation a staff member stated that a key person approach was in operation in the service with staff responsible for building relationships with their key children and their parents. Staff stated they carry out observations of the children and discuss any issues and accomplishments with the parents.
- Staff were observed engaging positively with the children throughout the morning. During table top activities staff were heard praising children's efforts and giving encouragement in relation to each child's chosen activity. Examples included children completing puzzles and making craft activities.
- Children's independence was promoted with one child observed collecting scissors to cut the top of a yogurt drink at snack time while other children were observed putting on and zipping up their coats before going outdoors to play.
- Transitions were announced with a bell making the children aware that one activity was coming to an end, and another was beginning, helping to create a more predictable environment for the children.
- Various methods of communication were stated as being in use to communicate and exchange information with parents/guardians. Staff stated in conversation that they speak with parents/guardians at drop off and collection times and that there is an instant group messaging system for both parents and staff with text messaging also an alternative which is in use by staff.
- Informal meetings take place daily and the inspector was presented with a daily notebook containing notes such as messages regarding children being out sick, planning of activities and strategies to use if an approach is not working.

PHYSICAL AND MATERIAL ENVIRONMENT:

- The care room had a range of play based materials and Montessori equipment that provided opportunities to enhance and promote the learning needs of the children across all areas of development. Examples included a range of knobbed cylinders, rods and spindles which prepare children for mathematics activities and range of sensory activities including playdough and sand helping to promote the children's sense of touch while increasing the children's concentration and focus.
- The room was brightly lit, and the materials and resources were presented in baskets on low level shelving which encouraged choice and promoted independence.

- Children’s themed artwork was displayed creatively and a hands-on nature table with bulbs with shoots and roots, pinecones, stones and birds’ nests were accessible at the children’s height to explore and investigate with magnifying glasses.
- The environment was print rich with spring displays featuring seasonal words and pictures including frog spawn, birds’ nests and chicks.
- Age and stage appropriate tables and chairs were arranged for children to sit in a group or individually.
- The outdoor play areas were observed to provide alternative environments for the children. A range of developmentally appropriate equipment was provided in each area. Opportunities were provided in the grassy area for the children to experience challenge and safe risk. Examples of the resources included a slide, climbing apparatus and balance logs while in the partially covered outdoor play area resources included a fully equipped mud kitchen and tool bench promoting imaginary and role play, arts and crafts activities offering opportunities for creative development, and various materials promoting gross motor skills including balls for throwing and kicking.

PROGRAMME OF ACTIVITIES:

- Short-, medium- and long-term plans were available on the notice board in the care room. The room was filled with evidence by way of displays and the choice of themed activities on offer throughout the morning.
- Language development was heard throughout the morning being supported on a one to one and group basis by all staff through storytelling and songs. Examples included welcoming songs, rhymes relating to themes including Hickory, Dickory Dock with a strong emphasis on promoting the Irish language in relation to colours and numbers.
- Activities were child led with children being facilitated to make their own choice in selecting equipment and activities they wished to engage in. Examples included groups of children making a craft activity while others chose fine skill activities such as inserting pegs into peg boards and others selecting free play with various resources and materials.

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 was secured upon arrival with a buzzer which required to be pressed for admittance, preventing unauthorised adults from entering the service.
- The internal doors were alarmed and secured preventing children from leaving the service unsupervised.
- The four radiators had covers protecting the children from burns.
- Two windows openings in the care room were inaccessible to the children.
- All toys and equipment appeared well maintained and were in good working order.
- All flexes and cables were stored out of reach of the children.
- Cleaning agents were stored in a cupboard in the locked kitchen.
- The kettle was stored on a work surface, out of reach of the children, in the locked kitchen.
- The large outdoor play area was secured with high concrete walls, wooden and metal fencing and bolted gates which were inaccessible by the children and were fitted with alarms. The oil tank was made secure with wooden fencing. Wooden supports for the covered outdoor play area were fitted with protective covers to prevent injury should a child bang into them.

Infection Control:

- All wash hand basins in use by the adults and children were observed to be fitted with thermostatically controlled hot water recorded at 37.8°C. Dispensing foam soap, dispensing paper towels and pedal operated pedal bins were available for the disposal of paper waste at each handwashing station.
- Children were observed washing their hands before food, after toileting, and coming in from the outdoor play area.
- A tissue station was available with pictorial instructions, it was observed in use throughout the morning.
- Staff were observed disinfecting tables before and after food. In addition, the floor was swept ensuring the area was kept safe and clean.
- Cleaning records were noted to be kept and were up to date.

- Perishable food was stored in the fridge, ensuring it did not spoil from being left in the care room at room temperature.

Administration of Medication:

- Anti-febrile medication was stored in its original container in a cupboard in the locked kitchen.

Safe Sleep:

- A rest/quiet area was available where the children could relax and sit quietly. It was furnished with a circular mat on the floor, two large floor cushions, one bean bag, and a rocking chair with a cushion. Books, provided on nearby shelving, were available for the children to read while sitting.

Fire Safety:

- All fire doors were unobstructed and the main push bar fire exit door, which led out to the fire assembly area at the front of the service, was fitted with an alarm.
- Firefighting equipment was secured to the walls.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

- The inspector observed that an adult sized dolls house was not anchored, posing a safety risk should it tip or fall on a child.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

The following statement was received from the registered provider:

General Safety:

- The doll's house has been secured with brackets to ensure it does not tip or fall on the children.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

- A photograph of the secured doll's house was received in the office of the inspectorate

Summary Comment

The non-compliance identified under Regulation 23 has been addressed.

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.

(2) Where there are more than 15 children attending a pre-school service in a drop-in centre, the registered provider shall ensure that one employee or unpaid worker is assigned responsibility for the checking in and out of children.

Compliance Information

(1) The attendance book was available in which the inspector observed that all of the early years children's checking in and out times had been completed.

(2) The inspector observed that one adult was responsible for the recording of the checking in and out times of the children in the early years' service.

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) Certificates were available to evidence that two staff members had completed First Aid Responder (FAR) training and a third staff member had completed paediatric first aid. The staff roster confirmed that a person trained in first aid was available at all times.

(2) (a) (b) A first aid box, located in a cupboard within reach of the adults in the service, was available at all times.

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 firefighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises.
- (2) The record referred to in paragraph (1) shall be open to inspection by-
- (c) an authorised person.
- (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) Written records of monthly fire drills were available in the service. The last fire drill recorded was dated 11 January 2024, with previous dates including 1 December 2023 and 7 November 2023.
 - (b) Written records were available recording the number, type and maintenance records of the firefighting equipment and the smoke alarms. The firefighting equipment certificate was dated 10 October 2023 and the smoke alarm certificate was dated 11 October 2023.
- (2)
- (c) All records referred to in paragraph (1) were open to review by the inspector.
- (4) The pictorial fire drill routine was located at the main fire exit door on the wall of the care room.

Part VI – Safety

Regulation 28 – Insurance

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

Compliance Information

An insurance certificate, with an expiry date of the 27 March 2024, was available to evidence that the service had cover for twenty-two children on a sessional basis.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 – Premises

A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-

- (a) of sound and stable structure,*
- (b) safe and secure,*
- (e) equipped with adequate and suitable sanitary facilities.*

Compliance Information

- (a) The service appeared to be of sound and stable structure.
- (b) All internal and external doors were secured, and the outdoor area was secured with high concrete walls, metal/wooden fencing and alarmed bolted gates.

Non-Compliance Information

- (e) There is currently no adult toilet available in the service, this was noted on the last inspection of 4 October 2021. In their response in the corrective and preventive actions the registered provider stated that the Landlord would be contacted in order to seek agreement with the installation of a third toilet, for the adults. In conversation the registered provider sighted a delay due to the need for a fire certificate, which has since been issued on 9 October 2023.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The following statement was received from the registered provider:

- (e) A commencement date of 1 July 2024 has been forwarded from the Pipe Band Committee to allow for the completion of the wheelchair accessible toilet, as there will be no children using the hall over the summer months. A risk assessment is currently in place in regard to the timing of staff toileting and additional cleaning is carried out daily by staff to ensure that the toilets and sanitary ware are cleaned thoroughly and often throughout the day.

Supporting documentation submitted

(e) A copy of an email from the Pipe Band Hall Committee was received confirming the commencement date of 1 July 2024 to install the new wheelchair accessible toilet. In addition, a copy of a comprehensive risk assessment, addressing the additional precautions and timing of the toileting of adults and children, was received in the office of the inspectorate along with cleaning records indicating the additional cleaning times added of the toilets and sanitary areas until the new adult toilet has been installed.

Summary Comment

The non-compliance identified under Regulation 29 (e) remains, however the planned works to address this are accepted. This will be reviewed on the next inspection.