

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

School Age Services

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2019CN003SA
Name of School Age Service:	Circle of Friends Childcare Services
Name of Registered Provider(s):	Nicola Clail
Address of School Age Service:	Community Hall Railway Road Killeshandra Co. Cavan
Eircode:	H12 RY23

Date of Inspection:	16 May 2024
Number of school age children present during inspection:	PM 24
Registration status:	Registered
Conditions (if applicable):	Not applicable

Address of the Early Years Inspectorate	Early Years Inspectorate 180-189 Lakeshore Drive Airside Business Park Swords Co. Dublin
Inspection undertaken by:	M. McDonnell A. Bradshaw
Title:	Early years inspectors

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Authority to Inspect

Tusla's 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).

Description of Service:

Circle of Friends is a school age care and pre-school service based in a two-storey community building in a rural area of Co Cavan. The service is registered to accommodate children aged 4 to 12 years old. The service is open Monday to Friday between 2.00pm and 6.00pm for an afterschool club. The school age children are accommodated in a first-floor room and they have access to a large hall downstairs and an outdoor space. The children and staff have access to sanitary facilities, and there is an onsite kitchen.

Staffing:

The registered provider works in the service. The registered provider employs six staff members who work directly with the school age children.

Additional Information:

This inspection was triggered following information received by the Inspectorate.

Legislation

Tusla's Early Years Inspectorate is the independent statutory regulator of School Age Services in Ireland, and its role is to promote and monitor the safety and quality of school age care provision in accordance with the following legislation:

- The Child and Family Agency Act 2013, Part 12.
- Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) (Registration of School Age Services) (Amendment) Regulations 2022.
- The Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Registration of School Age Services

Regulations 2018 (S.I. 575 of 2018).

A school age service means any early years' service, play group, day nursery, crèche, day-care or other similar service which:

- caters for children under the age of 15 years enrolled in a school providing primary or post-primary education,
- provides a range of activities that are developmental, educational and recreational in manner, which take place outside of school hours, the primary purpose of which is to care for children where their parents are unavailable, and
- the basis for access to which is made publicly known to the parents and guardians of the children referred to in point (a) above.

It is the responsibility of a registered provider to ensure the safety and well-being of school age children and the above legislation authorises Tusla to assess compliance with the Regulations.

Inspection Methodology:

The inspection is unannounced to assess compliance with the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Registration of School Age Services Regulations 2018 (S.I. 575 of 2018), Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) (Registration of School Age Services) (Amendment) Regulations 2022, and the Child Care Act 1991, Section 58 as amended by Part 12 of the Child and Family Agency Act, 2013.

The findings on inspection are gathered through a triangulation method, including:

- Information obtained through examination of documentation.
- Direct observation.
- Discussion with relevant staff.

This inspection aims to determine the extent to which service is appropriate for the care, safety, and wellbeing of children in accordance with the regulations cited above.

Inspection findings are documented in the School Age Services 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 corrected the non-compliance and how they will prevent them 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 CAPA 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.

Acknowledgements:

The inspectors wish to acknowledge the co-operation of the children, registered provider, person in charge, and staff who were present on the day of the inspection.

Summary of Findings:

On the day of inspection, the registered provider was found to be compliant in:

- Regulation 8(1)(a)(b)(c): Vetting disclosures;
- Regulation 9(1)(2)(4): Staffing levels;
- Regulation 10: Policies etc. of school age service;
- Regulation 12: Insurance;
- Regulation 13(1)(a)(b)(c): Complaints;

- Child Care Act 1991, Section 58(G) as amended by Part 12 of the Child and Family Agency Act, 2013.

On the day of inspection, the registered provider was found to be non-compliant in:

- Regulation 8(1)(d)(2): Vetting disclosures;

Conclusion and follow-up actions:

The registered provider submitted a corrective and preventive action form and evidence that addressed the non-compliances identified during the inspection.

Regulation 8: Vetting disclosures

(1) A registered provider of a school age service other than a childminding service 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.*

(2) The procedures specified in paragraph 1 shall be carried out prior to any person being appointed, assigned or allowed access to or contact with a child attending the school age service.

Regulatory Requirement Met

(1)(a)(b)(c)(d)

The inspector reviewed the staff files of the registered provider and the six staff members

employed in the service who worked with the school age children. There were two written and validated references available for all staff members from a previous employer or source other than a previous employer. A Garda vetting disclosure, completed in the last three years, was available for all staff members which was in compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

Regulatory Requirement not met

(1)(d)

Police vetting was required for one staff member and this vetting was not available. A review of documentation demonstrated that police vetting was not required for the six other staff members.

(2)

Due to the absence of police vetting the registered provider had not ensured that they had considered all vetting procedures before a staff member was appointed, assigned or allowed access to or contact with the children attending the service.

Corrective & Preventive Action Response submitted by the Registered Provider

(1)(d)

The registered provider submitted the required police vetting. The registered provider stated that they will ensure that a staff member's employment history will be checked and police vetting will be obtained if required.

(2)

The registered provider stated that they would ensure that all vetting procedures are completed before a staff member works with children.

Summary of Findings

The action and evidence submitted by the registered provider, in their corrective and preventive action plan, have addressed the non-compliances identified on inspection.

Regulation 9: Staffing levels

- (1) Subject to this Regulation, a registered provider of a school age service other than a childminding service shall ensure that there is at all times an adequate number of competent and suitable adults on the premises while the service is operating.*
- (2) Without prejudice to paragraph (1), a registered provider of a school age service other than a childminding service shall ensure that there is a minimum ratio of 1 adult to 12 children at all times while the service is operating.*
- (4) A registered provider of a school age service shall ensure that the school age children attending the service are appropriately supervised at all times.*

Regulatory Requirement Met

(1)(2)(4)

On the day of the inspection, 3 staff members were working directly with the 24 children in attendance.

There was appropriate supervision of the children observed. For example, whilst some children completed their homework upstairs with a staff member, other children played in the hall with another staff member.

Regulation 10: Policies of a school age service

A registered provider of a school age service shall ensure that the policies and statements specified in Schedule 6 are in place for the service.

Regulatory Requirement Met

The service's complaints policy and the drop-off and collection policy were reviewed. The policies contained information as per Schedule 6 of the regulations to support staff in their practice. There was documentation available to show that parents and staff had been informed of these policies.

Regulation 12: Insurance

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

Regulatory Requirement Met

The service was insured from 28 March 2024 to 27 March 2025 for 60 children. On the day of inspection, there were 24 school age children.

Regulation 13: Complaints

- (1) A registered provider of a school age service other than a childminding service shall ensure that the complaints policy of the service specifies—*
- (a) the procedure to be followed by a person for the purposes of making a complaint in relation to the service,*
 - (b) the manner in which such a complaint shall be dealt with, and*
 - (c) the procedures for keeping a person who makes such a complaint informed of the manner in which it is being dealt with.*

Regulatory Requirement Met

(1)(a)(b)(c)

The complaints policy detailed the procedure for making a complaint and how verbal and written complaints would be dealt with. There was an informal, formal, and escalation process documented in the policy. The policy referenced how a complainant would be kept informed of the complaints procedure and the appeals process. On the day of the inspection, the registered provider and staff informed the inspector that there were no written or verbal complaints received.

Child Care Act 1991, Section 58(G) as amended by Part 12 of the Child and Family Agency Act, 2013

It shall be the duty of every person providing an early years service to take all reasonable measures to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of children attending the service and to comply with regulations made by the Minister under this Part.

Regulatory Requirement Met

During the inspection, the inspectors observed the health, safety and welfare of children being supported by the following:

- The procedure of school collection was reviewed. During the initial collection, children walked from a local school. Later they were collected in two cars from two local schools, one a short distance away. Documentary evidence demonstrated that both vehicles used as part of school collection were insured appropriately. The registered provider had a collection list which was reflective of the children who were collected on the day of inspection. Four of the children who required booster seats had these available for use. Two children on the collection were observed to not require the use of booster seats. The use of the seats was reflective of the service's collection and drop-off policy and there were spare booster seats available in both of the cars and in the service during the collection.
- The service had an internet policy dated November 2023. Staff were aware of the policy and there were records of staff training in all the service policies and procedures. There was no computer available for children's use and this was confirmed by staff and children. A risk assessment had been carried out recently, regarding the use of the internet by staff to support children when doing their homework and children's access to the internet. Following this risk assessment measures had been put in place to support the children's safety.
- The service policies were available at the entrance to the service. The registered provider had documentation in place to demonstrate that parents and guardians had been provided with the most recent revised and updated policy and procedures document following a recent premises update to the service.

- On the day of inspection each of the children were served meatballs, vegetables and mashed potato for dinner. The children discussed with the inspector some of their favourite meals which included Lasagne. A menu was available and on display in the front hall and the registered provider discussed that they were currently changing the menu due to children's preferences. Staff discussed how fruit and crackers were available should the children require snacks throughout the afternoon.