

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015LS061
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Name of Service:	Sonas Mountmellick Community Childcare Ltd
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Address of Service:	MDA Business Park, Irishtown, Mountmellick, Co. Laois
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Eircode:	R32 4A40
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Name of Registered Provider:	Paul Dempsey
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date(s) of Inspection:	25/05/2023
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No of pre-school children:	AM	72	PM	67
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, Tusla, Child and Family Agency Primary Care Centre, Church Avenue, Tullamore, Co. Offaly
Inspection undertaken by:	D .Molloy
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

Sonas Mountmellick Community Childcare Ltd is located in town of Mountmellick County Laois. The service is operated as a community service and a board of management is in place.

The service operates as a full day care and presently has an enrolment of 106 children, not all attending at the same time. The age range of children currently enrolled is from six month to six years of age. The full day care service is registered to operate from 7.30am to 6.30pm and the sessional services operate each morning from 9.30am to 12.30md.from Monday to Friday.

Sonas Mountmellick Community Childcare Ltd operates from a two-story purpose-built premises with addition of a linked converted two-story building on the same site in the IDA Business Park.

Ground Floor – Original Building

The ground floor is used for care of the younger children. This consists of a lobby area, a long hallway, a reception area, an office and two water closets for adult use, with wash hand basins. Care rooms opening off the main hallway include;

the baby room which also has direct entry into its own kitchenette, nappy changing area and baby sleeping room where nine standard cots are provided for the use of the babies.

The toddler wobbler rooms are linked and are located next to the main downstairs sleeping room and opens directly off the main hallway and also has direct access to its designated own sleeping room and its own kitchenette and nappy changing facility.

Five water closets and wash hand basins are provided on this floor.

The staff cloakroom and storage cupboard are also located off the main corridor.

The kitchen with an open hatch is located off the main corridor. An additional two toilets including one with reduced mobility access and wash hand basins are located on this floor.

First Floor- Original Building.

Children aged 3 to 4 years are catered for on this floor. Pre-school room 1, and a sleeping room are available on this floor. Two toilets and a nappy changing area are also available on this level.

Museum Building

This portion of the premises is used for older children aged 3 to 4 years.

This converted “museum” building offers facilities over two floors and is connected through a roofed outdoor passage to the main building.

Two pre-school rooms are provided in this part. An office, a staff room, four toilets. and wash hand basins are provided.

Outdoor Play Facilities.

Children have access to enclosed secure outdoor play areas which are designated for the use of different age groups. A combination of all-weather surfacing and tarmac are in place. A roof covers the play area used for the older children which provides shelter from inclement weather.

Staffing

The service presently employs thirty-one staff including the person in charge of the service. A designated cook and two designated housekeeping staff are part of the staff compliment. Early Childhood qualifications of staff range from level 6 to level 9 on the National Framework of Qualifications.

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 inspections may also focus on other areas as required.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under Regulation 19(a) - Health, welfare, and development of child and. Regulation 23 - Safeguarding health, safety, and welfare of child.

As a result, the scope of the inspection included the baby room, the nappy changing and sanitary accommodations and the outdoor play areas.

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 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
- (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.

(5) Paragraph (4) shall apply-

- (a) on or after 31 December 2016 in respect of pre-school services registered on or before 30 June 2016, and
- (b) on or after the date of registration in respect of all other pre-school services.

(6) Paragraph (4) shall not apply before 1 September 2021 to a person who-

(a) has signed a declaration on or before 30 June 2016 to the effect that he or she intends to retire from employment in a pre-school service before 1 September 2021, and

(b) is in possession of a letter from the Minister confirming that paragraph (4) shall not apply to him or her before that date.

(6A) is inserted by S.I. No.632 of 2016 CHILD CARE ACT 1991 (EARLY YEARS SERVICES) (AMENDMENT) REGULATIONS 2016 which states; Regulation 9 of the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations (S.I. No. 221 of 2016) is amended - in paragraph (4), by the substitution of “paragraphs (5), (6) and (6A)” for “paragraphs (5) and (6)”, and (b) by the insertion of the following paragraph after paragraph (6): “

(6A) Paragraph (4) shall not apply to an employee of a registered provider where - (a) the registered provider receives funding for the employment of the employee pursuant to a scheme funded by the Minister and known as the Access and Inclusion Model, and (b) the employment of the employee is for the purpose of providing support, pursuant to the scheme referred to in subparagraph (a), for a child attending the service to enable the child to participate in the programme known as the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) funding Programme.”

(7) A registered provider shall ensure that all employees, unpaid workers, and contractors are appropriately supervised and provided with appropriate information, and where necessary training, including in relation to the following:

(a) the policies, procedures and statements of the service specified in Schedule 5;

(b) Part VIIA (inserted by section 92 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013 (No. 40 of 2013)) of the Act, and

(c) these Regulations.

Compliance Information

(1)

(a) The service has a designated person in charge and a named person who is able to deputise as required,

(b) The registered provider who is not the designated person in in charge was not present during the inspection.

The person in charge facilitated the inspection and the roster showed that at all times the person in charge was present during the opening hours of the service.

(2)

The person in charge stated that two new staff members had commenced employment in the service since the last inspection. All staff files were reviewed on site on the day of inspection.

(a) (b) Validated references from all staff members' past employers, in particular the most recent employer, or validated references from reputable sources were available for review for all staff were available for review.

(c) A vetting disclosure received from the National Vetting Bureau of the Garda Síochána in accordance with the Act of 2012 in respect of all-staff member was available for review.

(d) Police vetting from other police authorities was required for one staff member and this was available for inspection. .

(3)

Required vetting was carried out prior to new staff member being appointed, assigned, or allowed access to or contact with a child attending the pre-school service.

(4)

All employees held at least a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 6-9 on the National Framework of Qualifications.

(6)(a)(b)

Not applicable as no employee had signed a declaration on or before 30 June 2016, to the effect that they intended to retire from employment in a pre-school service.

(6A)

One employee was working with children under the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) on the day of inspection.

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.

(4) Subject to paragraph (5), where a registered provider contemporaneously provides-

(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)
The required ratio of adults to children was maintained during the inspection. The registered provider ensured that there were sufficient adults working directly with the children. Records showed that the adult child ratio was upheld in the service.

(4)
(b) The required ratio of adults to children was observed during the inspection and records showed that the sufficient adults were rostered to work with the children each day.

(8) (a)
The person in charge had ensured that there were at least two adults on the premises at all times during the opening hours of the service.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 18 – Copy of Act etc.

A registered provider shall ensure that a copy of Part VIIA (inserted by section 92 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013 (No. 40 of 2013)) of the Act and of these Regulations is kept on the premises and the said copies shall be open to inspection on the premises by-

- (a) a parent or guardian of a child attending or proposing to attend the service,*
- (b) an employee, unpaid worker, or contractor, and*
- (c) an authorised person.*

Compliance Information

The registered provider had ensured that a copy of Part VIIA (inserted by section 92 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013 (No. 40 of 2013)) of the Act and of these Regulations was available on the premises and could be viewed by

- (a) a parent or guardian of a child attending or proposing to attend the service,
- (b) an employee, unpaid worker, or contractor, and
- (c) an authorised person.

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:

In the baby room development of gross motor skills, for example crawling, pulling to stand and early walking were supported by the staff and also aided by the care room environment. Adults were observed encouraging infants in their endeavours to become ambulant by holding hands. Staff encouraged early steps by encouraging infants to wobble towards them into their outstretched hands and offering words of praise upon achievement. Infants who were not walking were allowed supervised floor exercise time on their backs and on their fronts, as staff supported infants by helping them into tummy positions placing them on their tummies on soft rugs, their arms bent, so as to encourage the infant to put weight on their forearms. The lay out and furnishings of the large bright baby room, the toys provided in the baby room were developmentally appropriate, appealing to all senses and were clean and well maintained.

Older children were offered choice throughout their time in the service, and it was noted that they move freely indoors and outdoors particularly in the wobbler/toddler room where access to play facility was gained directly through large sliding doors. It was observed that some children chose to relax in the cosy corner provided for their use.

Supporting Relationships:

Overall staff remained constant, with the same staff in the service each day and this consistency created continuity of care and provided opportunity for children to form relationships with the staff. It was observed that the children appeared comfortable in the company of staff and a warm relaxed atmosphere was noted.

Parents involvement was encouraged, and parents had opportunity to meet with staff each day at hand over time and could come into the service and avail of individual meetings to discuss their own children's progress.

Children who needed additional help and support were supported by staff who helped children with their social skills.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 22 – Food and drink

A registered provider shall ensure that adequate and suitable, nutritious, and varied food and drink is available for each pre-school child attending the pre-school service.

Compliance Information

The service provided healthy varied nutritious food for the children. A three-week menu plan had been devised based on up-to-date national guidelines and was available for review. Food was freshly prepared on site each day by a designated cook and promptly served to the children. Children were offered breakfast on arrival, a mid-morning snack that was made up of sandwiches, fresh fruit, and yogurts. Dinner on the day was roast chicken, vegetables and potatoes, and mid-afternoon snack was crackers and cheese, tea was soup and brown bread. Milk and water were available. The individual dietary needs of two children were being facilitated. Infants were provided with chewy food under supervision that encouraged chewing and supported development of facial muscles. Babies who required to be spoon fed were provided with sloppy food and were carefully spoon fed by staff.

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:

Cleaning, sanitising products and equipment were stored in the designated locked cupboard out of reach of children. A pest control system was in place to safe guard against pests and records were maintained. The entry to the service was secured so as to ensure the safety of the children within and the main door was operated on a controlled entry system from the reception area which prevented unauthorised entry or the exit of a child unsupervised. The outdoor play areas were securely fenced and in the large play area the gates were locked from within. The heating system was checked and serviced annually by a professional person .

Infection Control:

The service was clean, staff were observed cleaning during the inspection and adults were familiar with the infection control policy. Children were observed washing their hands regularly and adults were observed offering assistance if necessary. The service was well ventilated with openable windows and air purifier system which allowed air flow and air exchange.

Administration of Medication:

A site-specific medication policy was available in the service and had been reviewed annually. Staff were familiar with policy and practice in relation to safe administration of medication. No medication was administered on the day of inspection.

Safe Sleep:

Three designated sleeping rooms were provided for children's use which were well ventilated. Temperature was controlled and the room was appropriately ventilated.

Staff were aware of best sleep practices, physically monitored sleeping children and recorded sleeping checks

Fire Safety:

The fire exits were unobstructed. A notice of the fire assembly point was on display to show fire assembly point to the back of the service

Outing:

The older children were taken on an outing at the end of the year. A site-specific outings policy had been drawn up and was operated by the 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)
Staff had up to date First Aid Responder (FAR) certification and were available to the children attending the pre-school service.
- (2)
(a) The first aid box was safely stored in an easily accessible location on the premises.
(b) The first aid box was readily available in the service 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-
(a) a parent or guardian of a pre-school child attending or proposing to attend the pre-school service,
(b) an employee, and
(c) an authorised person.

(3) A registered provider shall ensure that a record referred to in paragraph (2) is retained for a period of 5 years after its creation

(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

A written record was available of the fire drills carried out in the service. The last fire drill was recorded as being carried out on 09 May 2023 .

(b) The number, type and maintenance record of firefighting equipment and smoke alarms on the premises was available. The fire alarms were serviced on 25 November 2023, the firefighting equipment was also checked on 25 November 2023.

(2)

The record was available and open to parents, guardians, employees, and the authorised person.

(3)

The person in charge stated that records were retained for a period of 5 years after creation.

(4)

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

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

A copy of up-to-date insurance cover for the number of children attending the service. was available in the service. The insurance certificate was valid until March 2024.

Part IX - Inspection and Enforcement

Regulation 33 – Furnishing of information to agency

A registered provider shall furnish the Agency with such information as the Agency may require for the purpose of enforcing and executing these Regulations and the information shall be in such form, if any, as may be specified by the Agency.

Compliance Information

The registered provider facilitated the inspection and provided access to all information as was required for completion of the inspection.