

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

**TUSLA Identifier:** TU2015LS061

**Name of Service:** Sonas Mountmellick Community Childcare Ltd

**Address of Service:** MDA Business Park, Irishtown, Mountmellick, Co. Laois

**Eircode:** R32 4A40

**Name of Registered Provider:** Paul Dempsey

**Service type:** Full Day, Part Time, Sessional

**Dates of Inspection:** 21/08/2025

<b>No of pre-school children:</b>	AM	79	PM	66
-----------------------------------	----	----	----	----

<b>Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:</b>	Early Years Inspectorate Tusla Child and Family Agency Primary Care Centre Church Avenue Tullamore Co Offaly
<b>Inspection undertaken by:</b>	R Flynn and A Spain
<b>Title:</b>	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).

<b>Conditions if applicable</b>	Not applicable.
---------------------------------	-----------------

### Description of service

Sonas Mountmellick Community Childcare Ltd is located in the town of Mountmellick, County Laois.

The service offers full day-care, part-time care and sessional services to children aged between 0-6 years. The age range of children currently enrolled is from 1 to 6 years. The service operates from 7.30am to 6.30pm, Monday to Friday for 51 week of the year. A school age service is provided during school terms.

A lobby area, two staff offices, a large hallway, a baby room, wobbler room and toddler room are located on the ground floor of the original building referenced in this report as building 1. The baby room has direct access to a kitchenette, nappy changing area and sleep room. A purpose-built stainless-steel kitchen with an open hatch is located off the main corridor. Pre-school room 1, sanitary accommodation for children and a sleep room for children over the age of two, are available on the first floor of building 1.

The second building, known as the Museum comprises of a playroom, sanitary accommodation for children and a lobby area to hang children's coats and bags. Children attending the preschool 2 room are allocated to this building. The museum building is connected to the original building via a covered outdoor passage between the two buildings. Outdoor play areas are located to the sides and back of the premises.

### Staffing

The registered provider employs thirty-four adults in the service. Twenty-nine staff who provide direct care to the preschool children and five ancillary staff which includes one administrator, two cooks and two cleaners. The registered provider does not work directly in the service with the children. The person in charge facilitated 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 and safety. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under:

- Regulation 9 (1)(a)(b), (2) (a)(b)(c)(d), (4) – Management and recruitment,
- Regulation 10 – Policies, Procedures etc of Pre School Services,
- Regulation 11 (1)(2)(8)(a) – Staffing levels,
- Regulation 19 (1)(a) – Health, welfare and development of child,
- Regulation 20 (1)(a)(b), (3)(a) – Facilities for Rest and Play,
- Regulation 22 Food and drink,
- Regulation 23 – Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child,
- Regulation 25(1),(2)(a)(b)– First aid,
- Regulation 26(1)(a)(b),(4)– Fire safety measures,
- Regulation 28 – Insurance.

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 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, 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)(b)

The service had a designated person in charge and a named person to deputise. The person in charge was on the premises throughout the inspection.

(2)

Thirty five staff files including the registered providers were reviewed and the following was noted;

(a)

Twenty six written validated references were available from a previous employer and

(b)

Twenty seven written validated references were available from a source other than a previous employer.

(c)

Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for thirty-four staff members and for the registered provider. In respect of thirty two of the thirty five files reviewed, the service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years. Please refer to the information outlined under regulation 23 of this report.

(d)  
Police vetting was available for one staff member who had lived outside the state for a period of longer than six consecutive months as an adult.

(4)  
Twenty nine staff members working directly with children attending the service held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Levels 5 and 8 on the National Framework of Qualifications or a qualification deemed to be the equivalent.

### Non-Compliance Information

(2) (a)(b)  
Fifteen written validated references from a past employer or from a source other than a previous employer in respect of eight staff were not available.  
Two written references available for two staff members from past employers were not validated.

### Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

#### **Corrective and Preventive Action**

All outstanding written validated references have been received. The service has updated their recruitment policy to include 'no future employees will be allowed to start their employment without written references'.

#### **Supporting documentation submitted**

Copies of reference checks have been forwarded to the inspector.

### Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the corrective and preventive actions taken and evidence submitted. The non-compliances identified under Regulation 9 has been adequately addressed.

### Part III – Management and Staff

#### Regulation 10 – Policies, procedures etc. of pre-school service

*A registered provider of a pre-school service shall ensure that the written policies, procedures and statements specified in Schedule 5 are in place for the service.*

#### Compliance Information

The following policies were reviewed and were found to be in keeping with Regulation 10.

- Statement of purpose and function.
- Inclusion policy.
- Policy on Healthy Eating.
- Policy on Outings.

### Part III – Management and Staff

#### Regulation 11 – Staffing levels

*(8) 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)

An adequate number of adults were working directly with the children at all times as demonstrated by the examples in (2) below.

(2)

On the day of inspection nineteen staff members were working directly with the children. The person in charge was available onsite to support in all rooms if required. Two staff members were working in the kitchen. Two cleaners were present.

### **Morning**

- There were five adults providing direct care to fifteen children aged between 1-2 years in the baby room.
- There were four adults providing direct care to thirteen children aged between 1.5-2 years in the Wobbler room.
- There were four adults providing direct care to fourteen children aged between 2-3 years in the Toddler room.
- There were three adults providing direct care to twenty one children aged between 3-4 years in the preschool 1 room.
- There were three adults providing direct care to sixteen children aged between 3-4.5 years in the preschool 2 room.

### **Afternoon**

- There were three adults providing direct care to fourteen children aged between 1-2 years in the baby room.
- There were three adults providing direct care to thirteen children aged between 1.5-2 years in the Wobbler room.
- There were four adults providing direct care to twelve children aged between 2-3 years in the Toddler room.
- There were two adults providing direct care to seventeen children aged between 3-4 years in the preschool 1 room.
- There were two adults providing direct care to ten children aged between 3-4.5 years in the preschool 2 room.

(8)(a)

There were at least two adults on the premises duration the operational hours of the service. This was confirmed following review of the staff roster for the service.

## 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

(1)(a)

#### Basic Needs

The children were observed engaged, active and involved throughout the day as they chose between activities. Staff members were observed to be warm, kind and respectful towards the children in their care. Children were spoken to using their first names, appropriate eye contact was made, and soft vocal tones were used during interactions.

Healthy eating was promoted this was evidenced by a review of the menu plan, a discussion with the onsite cook, staff members and observation of dinner served on the day of inspection. Staff sat with the children during mealtimes and engaged in conversation. Babies who were sleeping during lunch time were provided with their meal once they woke up. Beakers and cups of water were provided with meals.

Babies and children from the wobbler room were fed in highchairs. Toddlers and the preschool children sat at low level tables while eating and engaged in conversations with each other and with the staff members who were observed sitting at the tables with the children.

#### Supporting relationships

Settling in and transitions were made as smooth as possible within the service. A child in the Baby room had recently commenced attending the service, beginning with short days. Staff comforted the child and offered cuddles and reassurance. Staff in preschool room 1 were observed to sit with the children during free play time and offer assistance when required for example, assistance was offered to apply clothing to dress up dolls. A staff member in the museum building was observed to gently assist a child to remove their jumper while engaging in friendly conversation.

The staff advised the inspectors that information and updates regarding the children's day were recorded and shared with parents on an electronic application. Daily handovers occur at drop off and collection times. Folders were maintained in the preschool rooms to take home at the end of the pre school year to illustrate activities the children engaged in and the emerging interests of the children. Parents were observed to enter the service when

collecting their children engaging in conversation with the staff. Children’s birthdays were displayed in each room. Artwork on display on the walls included cutouts of ice cream cones, the sun, shovels and buckets in the Museum building and a tree with apples, snails and frogs in preschool room one.

### Physical and material environment

Babies in the baby room were observed to play with pull along toys and toy vehicles. Staff in the wobbler room sat on the soft floor mats and read books with the children. Containers on accessible low shelves offered a variety of sensory toys such as soft spiky balls, soft books made with varying materials and stickle bricks, musical instruments and toy animals. After lunch, children in the wobbler room were observed engaged in tabletop activities such as making wooden jigsaws. Imaginative play was promoted with the availability of dolls and toy cars. Children in the toddler room choose to play with the dolls house, toy buggies and were observed engaging in tabletop activities with magnetic and connector toys.

The pre-school rooms had a range of play-based equipment that offered stimulation, exploration, and imagination. Children cared for in the “museum” were observed playing in groups with building bricks and blocks, playing with puzzles and jigsaws, while staff engaged in leisurely conversation with the children. Toys and play equipment available to children in both buildings included crayons, paint, shapes, glitter and paper in art areas. Dress up areas with mirrors were located in the rooms. Home corners were provided with cookers, cooking equipment, playhouses, dolls and prams. Games, puzzles, jigsaws, interconnecting and magnetic toys were available for tabletop activities. Sand and water trays were provided in messy play areas. Miniature animals and toys on wheels were provided in transport areas. In addition, a sensory room in building 2 had a soft wall and floor padding and was equipped with sensory lamps and play equipment.

### Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

#### Regulation 20 – Facilities for rest and play

*(1) Subject to this regulation, a registered provider shall ensure that-*

- (a) having regard to the number of pre-school children attending the service, their respective ages and the amount of time they spend on the premises, there are adequate and suitable facilities for each child to play indoors and, where required by these Regulations, outdoors, during the day, and*
- (b) there are adequate and suitable facilities for a pre-school child to rest during the day, and in the case of an overnight pre-school service, during the day and the night.*

*(3) A registered provider of a full day care service, a part-time day care service or a childminding service, other than such a service to which paragraph (2) applies, shall ensure that-*

*(a) a suitable, safe and secure outdoor space to which the pre-school children attending the service have access on a daily basis is provided on the premises.*

### Compliance Information

(1)(a)

The care rooms were bright and spacious for the children to move about, work and play during their time spent in the service. Equipment and materials were positioned at an accessible level on open shelving in each room which nurtured independence, facilitated choice, and encouraged curiosity and spontaneous play.

(b)

Large vinyl mats with cushions were provided in the baby and wobbler rooms. The toddler room had a vinyl mat area and a vinyl armchair for rest purposes. Both preschool 1 on the first floor of the main building and preschool room 2 in the adjoining building, were provided with large vinyl-covered foam cushions and small soft cushions in the rest areas of the rooms for children to rest and relax on after activities. Books were located on open low level shelving in the rest areas to promote an early interest in reading.

Individual sleep rooms with cots were provided off the baby room and wobbler room. Ten cots were available for the sleep needs of babies who required a cot to sleep in. Fifteen cots were available in the wobbler sleep room. Four low level beds were available in the wobbler sleep room for children over the age of two years. Forty-four low level beds were available upstairs in the main building and utilised by children from the toddler room and the preschool rooms who required a sleep during the day.

(3)(a).

Three separate enclosed outdoor play areas were provided on the premises.

The baby room, wobbler room and toddler room had direct access to a secure outdoor area at the side of the premises. A high cast iron gate secured the outdoor play area from the inside. Toys and play equipment provided in this area included three wooden play stations for pretend play, a playhouse, a train and colourful low level concrete mushrooms safely anchored to the ground. A variety of ride on toys were available to play with on the smooth ground surface. A storage shed was provided to store outdoor toys not in use and to rotate toys for use outdoors.

A second outdoor play area was provided with an all-weather surface. Picnic tables and benches and a large wooden school bus were provided in this play area which was enclosed by high concrete and stone walls. The cast

iron gate leading from this area to the front of the service was secured from inside to prevent unauthorised access to the children playing outdoors.

A third enclosed play area was provided between the two buildings. This area also had an all-weather surface and had picnic tables and seating to accommodate tabletop activities outdoors.

A “playground schedule” was available in the service to allow staggered use of outdoor play areas by children attending the different care rooms.

### 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

All meals and snacks were provided by the service and prepared in the kitchen onsite. The service had a four week menu plan. Dinner served on the day of inspection was roast chicken, vegetables and potatoes. The afternoon tea provided was potato croquettes and fish fingers, with water to drink. Children who were dairy intolerant were accommodated and provided with dairy free alternatives such as potato croquettes made with a non-dairy coating. Meals served on the day of inspection in the children’s rooms were observed to be in keeping with the menu plan for the day. Babies bottles were stored in the fridge of the baby room.

### 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:

- Entry to the service was secured and controlled with a keypad and bell system. This system prevented children from exiting the service unsupervised and restricted unauthorised persons from gaining access to the premises.
- Cleaning products were stored on high shelves out of reach of children.

- The toys and play equipment observed in use by the children on the day of inspection were well maintained and in good working order.
- Handrails on the stairs in both buildings were positioned on both sides of the stairs, and a low-level handrail was in place for smaller children to use when transitioning between their rooms and outside.
- Each care room has an internal phone system for staff to communicate with each other during the day. Staff were observed to call staff from other rooms when additional staff were required in a room.

### Infection Control:

- Liquid hand soap, thermostatically controlled hot water and disposable paper towels were provided at the wash hand basins in the children's sanitary accommodation. Five child size sinks were provided in the sanitary accommodation. Each sink was at a staggered height, from low to high, to accommodate children of all ages attending the service.
- Low level beds for use by children from the toddler room and preschool rooms were individually labelled with the children's names for use. Bed linen for cots and low-level beds was stored on individually labelled shelves for each child. Each care room had a designated day for laundering sheets. A large industrial washing machine and two dryers were available onsite.
- A fridge was available in the kitchen area of the baby room for the storage of bottles of milk and water.
- A steriliser was available in the kitchen area off the baby room for the sterilising of babies sooters. Extra sooters were stored in individual labelled cases.
- A nappy changing area was provided off the baby room. Three nappy changing areas were provided in the downstairs sanitary accommodation for nappy changing of children from 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 to a child if required. Temperature reducing medication was stored in the main kitchen and in the kitchen off the baby room. Written parental consent was available should medication be required to be administered to a child in the event of an emergency.

### Safe Sleep:

- A log was maintained in the baby sleep room to record the room temperature while children slept. Sleep checks were conducted by the staff every 10 minutes and recorded on a tablet. The temperature in the baby sleep room was recorded at 19.9°C.

### Fire Safety:

- Regular fire drills were recorded as taking place monthly. Fire exits in the premises were easily recognisable and unobstructed. A notice showing the fire assembly point at the back of the service was on display.

### Outing:

- An outings policy was available for review in the service. Staff advised the inspector that outings occur with the older children in the service each year. A documented risk assessment was available in respect of a recent outing conducted in the service with children from the preschool 1 and 2 rooms. A risk assessment and check list was completed prior to the outing.

### Non-Compliance Information

#### General Safety:

1. Garda vetting was available for three staff members. However, these vetting disclosures were not dated within the previous three years in adherence with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice 'EYI-RN12.3 Renewal of Garda Vetting'.

#### Infection Control:

2. One cot mattress was observed soiled and stained in the baby sleep room and required replacing.
3. Five cot mattresses were observed soiled and stained in the wobbler sleep room and required replacing.
4. Waterproof mattress protectors were not provided on eight mattresses in the baby sleep room and on eleven cot mattresses in the wobbler sleep room.
5. Foot pedal operated bins were not provided in the sanitary accommodation downstairs in the main building. Three bins without lids were provided in the sanitary accommodation.
6. The nappy changing practices observed for two nappy changes in the baby room, posed a risk of cross infection as evidenced by the following observations:
  - Staff did not wear disposable aprons.
  - Single use disposable gloves worn for nappy changes, were not removed at the point that the soiled nappy and used cleaning material were bagged up prior to being disposed of.
  - Children's hands were not washed following nappy changing.
  - Staff did wash their hands following each nappy change.
7. Handwashing practices were inadequate to control the spread of infection as children's hands were not routinely washed. Children were not brought to wash their hands before eating meals and snacks in the baby room. The inspectors observed that staff did not routinely supervise handwashing after children used the toilets located off preschool 1 room.

### Action submitted by the Registered Provider

#### Corrective & Preventive Action

##### General Safety:

- Two out of date garda vetting disclosure have been completed. One staff member has ceased to be employed by the service. The service has implemented a database system with garda vetting renewal dates.

##### Infection Control:

3. and 4. Twenty waterproof mattresses have been ordered, and maintenance checks will be conducted.
5. New foot pedal bins have replaced all the old bins in every room. Spare bins are available to replace any that get broken.
- 6 and 7. Updated hand hygiene and nappy changing protocol has been addressed with all staff.

#### Supporting documentation submitted

##### General Safety

- Two updated garda vetting disclosures has been reviewed by the inspector.

##### Infection Control:

3. 4. Invoice for new mattresses received.
5. Photograph of new bins received.

### Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the corrective and preventive actions taken and evidence submitted. The non-compliances identified under Regulation 23 has been adequately addressed.

### 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)

Six staff members with up to date First Aid Response (FAR) training with an expiry date of 28 June 2027 were available to the children attending the service.

(2)(a)(b)

First aid boxes were stored at high level in all playrooms in the service, in both sleep rooms, in the kitchen and in the entrance hallway. First aid boxes were easily accessible to staff caring for children in attendance in the 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 firefighting 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)

The service maintained a record of fire drills conducted in the service. The last monthly fire drill was recorded on 07 August 2025.

(b)

The maintenance record for the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms confirmed that an annual service was conducted on 15 April 2025.

(4)

A notice of the procedure to be followed in the event of a fire, which was specific to each room at ground and first floor level was available in each room.

## Part VI - Safety

### Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

### Compliance Information

The service had insurance cover for a maximum of 112 children in daily attendance in a full day care service. Insurance cover was valid from the 28 March 2025 to the 27 March 2026.