

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015MH054
Name of Service:	Fonthill Lodge Childcare
Address of Service:	Main Street, Clonee, Co. Meath
Eircode:	D15 XT73
Name of Registered Provider:	Conor Lynch, Maurice Lynch
Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
Dates of Inspection:	23/04/2024
Date 2 of Inspection:	24/04/2024

No of pre-school children: Day 1	AM	128	PM	96
Day 2	AM	126	PM	97

Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Tusla Early Years Inspectorate Family Resource Centre Commons Road Navan, Co. Meath
Inspection undertaken by:	D .Murray, AM. Cunningham & C. Tunney
Title:	Early Years Inspectors

Authority to Inspect

The Tusla Early Years Inspectorate carries out inspections of Early Years Services under Section 58(J) of the Child Care Act 1991 (as inserted by Section 92 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013).

Conditions if applicable	Not Applicable
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Description of service

Fonthill Lodge Childcare is privately owned and is 1 of 2 services operated by the registered providers. The service provides full day care, part time, sessional and school aged childcare to children from 0 to 6 years and operates from 07:30am to 6:30pm Monday to Friday. Children who are eligible can participate in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme. The service consists of a reception area, office, 11 care rooms, kitchen and sanitary facilities. A large outdoor space which is divided into different areas is located to the rear of the premises.

Staffing

The 2 registered providers employ a designated person in charge, 27 childcare staff a cook who also works with the school aged children, 2 school age staff and 2 cleaners.

23/4/24 Present on the morning of inspection were the designated person in charge, 23 childcare staff a cook who also works with the school aged children, 2 school aged staff and a cleaner. Two third level student were also present on placement.

24/4/24 Present on the morning of the inspection were the designated person in charge, 23 childcare staff ,a cook who also works with the school aged children, 2 school aged staff and a cleaner.

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 inspectors wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the designated 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.

(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.

(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."

Compliance Information

On the 23/04/2024 and 24/04/2024

- (1) (a) The service had a designated person in charge and a named person to deputise as required.
- (b) A designated person in charge was on the premises when the inspectors arrived unannounced to carry out the inspection.

(c) A clear management structure was displayed in the entrance hallway in the service.

(2) (a)&(b) Thirty-five staff files were reviewed along with 2 students.

Seventy-four validated written references were available either from a past employer or from a reputable source.

(c) Garda vetting disclosure was available for the 37 adults. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) Police vetting was available for 17 staff members who had resided outside the jurisdiction for a period of more than 6 consecutive months as an adult.

(4) Twenty eight childcare staff members had a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 and above on the National Framework of Qualifications or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

(6) (a) One staff member was employed under the scheme known as the Access and Inclusion Model.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 11 - Staffing levels

(1) Subject to this Regulation, a registered provider shall ensure that there is at all times an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the pre-school service.

(2) Subject to paragraphs (4) and (5), a registered provider of a full day care service or a part-time day care service shall ensure that at all times the minimum ratio of adults to children specified in column (3) of Part 1 of Schedule 6 opposite a particular reference number specified in column (1) of that Part in respect of the age range of the children specified in column (2) thereof at that reference number is satisfied.

(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) On both days the registered providers ensured that an adequate number of adults were working directly with the children attending the service.

On 23/4/24, there was the designated person in charge, 23 childcare staff working directly with the 128 children attending the service. Two students were on placement.

On 24/4/24, there was the designated person in charge, 24 childcare staff with 1 additional childcare staff commencing work at 1pm working directly with the 126 children attending the service.

(2) On both days the correct adult/child ratio was maintained in the service throughout the inspection.

On 23/4/24, the following adult to child ratios were observed when the service was operating at capacity on the day of inspection:

- In the Nest room there was 1 staff with 5 children ranging in age from 12 to 18 months all attending on a full day care basis.
- In the Caterpillar room there were 2 staff with 10 children ranging in age from 18 to 2 years all attending on a full day care basis.
- In the Butterfly room there were 1 staff with 6 children ranging in age from 2 to 2.6 years all attending the full day care service.
- In the Bumble Bees room there were 2 staff with 11 children ranging in age from 2 to 2 year 8 months all attending the full day care service.
- In the Owls room there were 2 staff with 12 children ranging in age from 2 years 8 months to 3 years all attending the full day care service.
- In the Cubs room there were 2 staff with 12 children ranging in age from 2 to 3 years all attending the full day care service.
- In the Green room there were 2 staff with 14 children ranging in age from 3 to 4 years all attending the full day care service.
- In the Orange room there were 2 staff and a third level student with 12 children ranging in age from 3 to 4 years all attending the sessional service from 08:45 to 11:45am.
- In the Purple room there were 3 staff with 18 children ranging in age from 4 to 5 years all attending the sessional service from 09:00 to 12:am.
- In the Red room there were 2 staff with 13 children ranging in age from 4 to 5 years of which 12 were attending the full day care service with 1 child attending the sessional service from 09:00 to 12:am.
- In the Blue room there were 2 staff and a third level student with 15 children ranging in age from 3 to 5 years, of which 14 were attending the full day care service with 1 child attending the sessional service from 09:00 to 12:am.

The designated person in charge and a relief staff member were available to provide support to the care rooms as needed.

On 24/04/24, the following adult to child ratios were observed when the service was operating at capacity on the day of inspection:

- In the Nest room there were 2 staff with 9 children ranging in age from 12 to 18 months all attending on a full day care basis.
- In the Caterpillar room there were 2 staff with 7 children ranging in age from 18 months to 2 years all attending on a full day care basis.
- In the Butterfly room there were 1 staff with 6 children ranging in age from 2 to 2.6 years all attending the full day care service.
- In the Bumble Bees room there were 2 staff with 10 children ranging in age from 2 to 2 year 8 months all attending the full day care service.
- In the Owls room there were 2 staff with 12 children ranging in age from 2 years 8 months to 3 years all attending the full day care service.
- In the Cubs room there were 2 staff with 12 children ranging in age from 2 to 3 years all attending the full day care service.
- In the Green room there were 2 staff with 16 children ranging in age from 3 to 4 years all attending the full day care service.
- In the Orange room there were 2 staff with 12 children ranging in age from 3 to 4 years all attending the sessional service from 08:45 to 11:45am.
- In the Purple room there were 3 staff with 15 children ranging in age from 4 to 5 years all attending the sessional service from 09:00 to 12:am.
- In the Red room there were 2 staff with 14 children ranging in age from 4 to 5 years of which 12 were attending the full day care service with 2 child attending the sessional service from 09:00 to 12:am.
- In the Blue room there were 2 staff with 13 children ranging in age from 3 to 5 years all attending the full day care service.

The designated person in charge and a relief staff member was available to provide support to the care rooms as needed.

(8)(a) The registered provider ensured that there were always two adults on the premises when the service was in operation, as evidenced in the staff roster maintained in 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

(3) A registered provider shall ensure that no practices that are disrespectful, degrading, exploitive, intimidating, emotionally or physically harmful or neglectful are carried out in respect of a pre-school child whilst attending the service

Compliance Information

(1)(a) The following observations were made on how each child's learning, development and well-being was facilitated within the daily life in the service:

Basic needs:

- All children individual needs were met with additional care, attention and supervision given as required. Childrens rotated between their care rooms and the outdoor spaces during the day.
- Staff members were observed changing children's nappies regularly and in a timely manner with warm one-to-one interactions during direct care. Older children were encouraged to become independent and self-caring, suitable to their age and stage of development which included using the toilet, hand washing, caring for their belongings and tidying away after activities and play.
- Children were observed enjoying meaningful, sustained play with tabletop activities, art and crafts and free playing with lots of conversation and laughter observed. Staff supported children's learning with activities that were observed to be fun and creative. In some of the care rooms the theme of the month were "Nature "and the "Solar System" with the children's artwork displayed to reflect these themes.
- The staff members sat and chatted with the children at mealtimes, helping the children when required whilst encouraging conversation and extending interactions.
- In the Nest room sleep was child led with some children availing of an early morning nap. The remainder of the children availing of rest time went to sleep at the scheduled sleep time after morning snack.

- The service embraces outdoor play and learning. Children were observed enjoying imaginative, energetic play with both their peers and staff members.
- Transitions were handled smoothly with children being given ample time to complete one activity before starting the next.

Supporting relationships around children:

- Children and parents were greeted at drop off and collection with friendly conversation overheard. Parents were updated by an electronic device regarding activities pertaining to their children throughout the day. The “Family Wall” in the care rooms gave a sense of identity and belonging. Overall, the children appeared comfortable, happy and relaxed in their environment.

(3) On the day of inspection no raised voices were heard the staff spoke to all children in a positive way and listened attentively to each child. They used welcoming facial expressions and gentle vocal tones.

Non-Compliance Information

Basic needs:

1. In the Nest and the Caterpillar rooms children were stripped down to their vests and nappies and placed at the tables for their morning snack in preparation for sleep. Children should be permitted to have their meals in the comfort of their own clothing with their privacy and dignity maintained.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

1. All staff have been updated on respecting children's privacy and dignity during mealtime. Going forward, children will be allowed to enjoy their meals in their own clothing, ensuring their comfort and maintaining their dignity.

A staff training session was conducted on 08/05/2024 focusing on best practices, emphasising the importance of respecting children's rights and ensuring their comfort and well-being during all activities, including mealtime. Management will continue to monitor to ensure this practice is implemented on a daily basis.

Supporting documentation submitted

Minutes of staff meeting

Summary Comment

The registered providers in the Corrective Action and Preventive Action plan has addressed the non-compliances for regulation 19 1(a), the response received has been reviewed and accepted.

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-
- (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)(b) The service had 2 cot rooms along the main corridor with 18 cots between both rooms, an additional cot room was available off the Nest room with 10 cots for the children under 2 years requiring sleep. Stackable beds were available for the children over 2 years which were placed in the care rooms as required. Within the care rooms there were soft furnishings, mats and cushions for children to take a break from activities and rest if needed.

(3)(a) There was a large outdoor space with an artificial grass surface, wood chip and soft matting which was divided by fencing into 10 different areas to accommodate the age range of children in the care rooms. There was also an outdoor space off the Nest room. Two partially sheltered areas permitted outdoor play in all types of weather.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 21 – Equipment and materials

A registered provider shall ensure that there is adequate and suitable furniture, play and work equipment and materials available on the premises of the pre-school service.

Compliance Information

The care rooms had areas of interest with supporting equipment which incorporated natural/sensorial materials, art and crafts and a range of suitable toys. Interest areas included home and kitchen corners, construction areas, arts and crafts zones, rest spaces and library corners. The play materials and equipment were stored on low-level shelving to facilitate the children to select and replace items of interest independently. Play materials were suitable for the age and stage of development of the children in the individual care rooms. There was a suitable range of books available in the care rooms to support children’s language development and provide choice at story time.

Equipment in the outdoor spaces included swings, slides, sand/water tables, building blocks, blackboards mounted to the walls, mud kitchens, play houses, tyres, domed climbing frame, ride on toys, 2 large wooden climbing frames with standing platforms and climbing walls with slides attached.

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 had a menu plan with a variety of dishes ranging from meat, fish and poultry all prepared onsite. On the day of inspection, the children were given a choice of cereals for breakfast and toast, lunch was served between 11 to 11:30 hours which was cheese and ham sandwiches. Dinner was served at 14:30 hours which consisted of turkey stew, mash potatoes and carrots. A light snack of custard and banana was served between 16:30 and 17:00 hours before leaving for home. Water and milk were the drinks of choice. The children attending the service on a sessional basis brought their own healthy packed lunches from home which included sandwiches, rice cakes, crackers, a variety of fruit and yogurt and water to drink.

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 following safety measures were in place on the day of inspection:

- The main door to the service was secured and the outdoor spaces were enclosed and had secure gates. These security measures ensured that a child did not exit unsupervised and restricted unauthorised persons from gaining access to the service and outdoor space.
- An outdoor risk assessment was conducted on a daily basis.
- All cleaning agents were stored out of reach of the children.
- All furniture and display units had a stable base with no risk of toppling identified.

Infection Control:

The following infection control measures were observed:

- The hand washing policy and nappy changing policy were implemented in practice (except for the non-compliances in the Nest, Caterpillar and Cubs rooms) with appropriate hand washing for staff and children at all times.
- Childrens pacifiers were placed in individual boxes and labelled.
- The service was clean with cleaning schedules maintained.

Safe Sleep:

Safe sleep practices were observed in the service as demonstrated by the following examples:

- A thermometer was available in the cot rooms to ensure the temperature of the rooms were maintained between 16 to 20 C while children were sleeping.
- A sleep log recording the position, colour and breathing pattern on each child was recorded at 10 minutes intervals.
- Children sleeping on stackable beds were supervised at all times.

Fire Safety:

The following fire safety measures were observed:

- The fire assembly point was located on the blue wall in the outdoor space.

- Fire drills were conducted on a monthly basis.
- The emergency exit doors were unobstructed.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

The following safety measures were not in place on the day of inspection:

1. In the Bumble Bees room some of the chairs available were not suitable for the age range of children in the room. The chairs were too high resulting in four children's feet swinging and not touching the ground to provide balance and stability.

Infection Control:

The following infection control measures were not in place on the day of inspection:

2. In the Nest room the following was observed:
 - Children's hands were not washed after nappy changing and before having their morning snack.
 - An apron was not worn by the staff member to protect her clothing from contamination during nappy changing.
 - The staff member returned the children to the care room with the same gloves used to change the children's nappies thereby contaminating the door handles and other surfaces.
 - In the Caterpillar and the Cubs rooms, children's hands were not washed after returning from outdoor play and before having their morning snack.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. All chairs have been replaced in the Bumble Bees room which are now suitable for the age range of the children. All chairs now provide adequate support, ensuring balance and stability for the children. Regular checks will be conducted to ensure that all furniture in the facility is appropriate for the age range of the children and meets safety standards. Staff were informed at the staff meeting on identifying and addressing safety concerns regarding furniture and equipment.

Infection Control:

2. All staff members have been reminded and updated on the hand washing and nappy changing policies. Visual aids have been replaced beside the wash hand basins as reminders. The management team will ensure these policies are implemented in practice on a daily basis.

Supporting documentation submitted

Written proof of purchase of chairs.

Minutes of staff meeting.

Summary Comment

The registered provider in the Corrective Action and Preventive Action plan has addressed the non-compliances for regulation 23 the response received has been reviewed and accepted.

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) The service provided evidence that a person had up to date First Aid Responders course and was available at all times to the children attending the pre-school service.

(2)(a) and (b) A suitably equipped first aid box was available and safely stored in the premises.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 26 - Fire safety measures

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of-

(a) any fire drill that takes place in the premises, and

(b) the number, type and maintenance record of fire fighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises.

(4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of fire shall be displayed in a conspicuous position in the premises.

Compliance Information

(1)(a) A written record was available of the fire drills completed in the service. The last recorded fire drill took place on 27/03/2024.

(b) A record was maintained of the mains powered smoke alarms and firefighting equipment on the premises. The mains powered smoke alarms were last serviced on the 28/02/2024. The firefighting equipment was last serviced on the 21/08/2023.

(4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire was conspicuously displayed in the premises.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

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

Compliance Information

The registered provider ensured that the service was adequately insured for 170 children at any one time attending for full day care. The policy showed that the service was insured from 28th March 2024 to the 27th March 2025.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

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

(b) safe and secure,

(c) kept adequately lit, heated and ventilated.

Non-Compliance Information

(c) The ventilation system in the nappy changing room between the Butterfly and the Bumble Bees rooms was not working leaving a foul odour after nappy changing. This room was enclosed with no window.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

(c)The ventilation system was serviced and is now working. The management team will ensure that the ventilation system is working on a daily basis and serviced frequently.

Supporting documentation submitted

Written evidence that the ventilation system was serviced.

Summary Comment

The registered provider in the Corrective Action and Preventive Action plan has addressed the non-compliances for regulation 29(c), the response received has been reviewed and accepted.