

# 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

**Date(s) of Inspection:** 27/05/2025

<b>No of pre-school children:</b>	<b>AM</b>	122	<b>PM</b>	101

<b>Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:</b>	Early Years Inspectorate 180-189 Lakeshore Drive Airside Business Park Swords Co Dublin
<b>Inspection undertaken by:</b>	M. McDonnell S McKenna
<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).

**Conditions if applicable** | Not applicable

### Description of service

Fonthill Lodge Childcare is a privately owned service based in a residential area of Co. Meath. The service is registered to provide sessional, part-time time and full-day care to children aged 0-6 years old. The service is located in a purpose built two-storey building, however all the rooms accessed by the children are based on the ground floor. The service operates 11 care rooms on the ground floor, some having direct access to an outdoor area. There are three dedicated cots rooms which are accessed from the hall and one from the Nest Room. There is also a kitchen and sanitary facilities for children and adults. There is a registered school-age service in operation on the premises.

### Staffing

The registered providers do not work in the service. There are 42 staff employed by the registered providers which includes 18 new staff since the last inspection in April 2024. The staffing compliment of the service includes a general manager, person in charge and deputy person in charge who work in a supernumerary capacity. There are four staff members who work in an auxiliary capacity inclusive of a cook, housekeeper, and two staff members who work only with the school age children. There are 35 staff members who work directly with the children.

### 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 children and safety. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under Regulation 9 Management & Recruitment, Regulation 11 Staffing Levels, Regulation 19 Health, Welfare & Development of Child, Regulation 23 Safeguarding Health, Safety and Welfare of Child, Regulation 25 First Aid and Regulation 29 Premises.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 19,23 and 29 As a result, the scope of the inspection included The Nest, Caterpillar, Bumblebee, Owls, Purple and Green Rooms.

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 general manager, 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.

#### Compliance Information

(1)

- (a) The person in charge and deputy person in charge were on the premises at the start of the inspection and remained on site for the duration of the inspection.
- (b) A review of the roster for the week of the inspection demonstrated that the designated person in charge or deputy person in charge was in the service at all times during operational hours.

(c) There were displays in the service and a discussion with staff members demonstrated there was a clearly defined management structure to ensure lines of accountability in the event of an emergency.

(2) Following the last inspection on 24 April 2024, a review of the staff roster, and staff attendance on the day of inspection demonstrated that there were 18 new staff members. The staff files for these new staff were reviewed. The Garda vetting disclosures for the staff members working at the last inspection were also reviewed.

(a) The registered provider had 36 written and validated references available for each of the new 18 staff members. Of these references available, 31 were from a previous employer.

(b) The registered provider had five written and validated references available from a reputable source.

(c) A Garda vetting disclosure was available for the 18 new staff members. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years for 8 previous staff members.

(d) A review of the documentation concerning the new staff members' employment history demonstrated that international police vetting was not required for 7 staff members. International police vetting for the other 12 staff members was available for review.

(4) Documentary evidence was available to confirm that 14 staff members employed to work with children held an appropriate childcare qualification at Level 5 or above on the National Framework of Qualifications, or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent. Four of the new staff members were not employed to work directly with the preschool children.

### 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.*

### Compliance Information

(1) On the day of inspection there was an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the pre-school service.

(2) On the inspectors' unannounced arrival, the adult child ratio was observed to be correct and remained so throughout the inspection. The following adult-to-child ratios were observed when the service was operating to maximum capacity on the day of inspection;

- In the Nest room there were two staff members with eight children aged between 1 year 3 months to 1 years 8 months old.
- In the Caterpillar room there was two staff members with 10 children aged between 1 year and 9 months old to 2 years and 3 months old.
- There were two adults caring for 8 children aged 3 years 4 months to 3 years 10 months old in the Butterfly Room.
- In Bumblebees, two adults cared for 11 children aged 2 years 11 months to 3 years old.
- In Owls, two adults cared for 10 children aged 2 years 11 months to 3 years 1 month old.
- In the Yellow Room two adults cared for 11 children aged 3 years 6 months to 4 years 5 months old.
- In the Green Room two adults cared for 14 children aged 3 years 8 months to 4 years 2 months old.
- In the Orange Room two adults cared for 12 children aged 3 years 5 months to 4 years 2 months old. School age care was provided in the afternoon.
- In the Blue Room two adults cared for 12 children aged 3 years 11 months to 4 years 6 months old on a sessional basis.
- In the Purple Room two adults cared for 12 children aged 4 years 3 months to 6 years 1 months old. School age care was provided in the afternoon.
- In the Red Room two adults cared for 14 children aged 4 years 11 months to 5 years 4 months old.

A staff member arrived to provide relief cover as per the roster. The person in charge and the deputy person in charge was available in a supernumerary capacity. An area manager is also rostered into 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

##### Basic Needs

In the Nest children had bibs on and were encouraged to feed themselves and were given spoons for both snack and dinner times. Children were also encouraged to express their own preferences as staff responded to verbal and nonverbal cues from the children as to when they wanted a sandwich for their snack and what type of sandwich, cheese, ham or ham and cheese they wanted. Children's snacks and dinner, which was chicken curry, were as shown on the menu for the service. The children's water was accessible to the children within their rooms. A staff member was observed changing nappies as required in both the Nest, Caterpillar and Owl rooms. At these times the staff member engaged with the children and chatted with them through the process. The older children were observed to use the toilet independently with staff remaining close by for support if required.

##### Supporting relationships around children

The staff members were observed to interact kindly with the children within their care. In the Nest and the Owl rooms staff were observed using positive behaviour management in small disagreements between children. The inspectors observed staff interacted in a kind and developmental way with children's play. For example, in The Nest room whilst children were playing with food items and the kitchen staff took the time to chat with the children about what kind of food they liked, and the children were observed interacting attentively to this play. A birthday celebration was also observed with a platter of different fruits being shared with the children. The staff discussed with the inspectors that the fruit choice was brought in by the parents to share with the child's peers to encourage healthy eating and engagement with parents. A key worker system was in place throughout the service, and this was supported by various long and short-term planning which were available for review. Children in the older rooms were observed picking activities they took part in, and this included sensory activities including homemade sand and painting.

### Physical and material environment

Appropriate relaxation areas were available in the rooms, with cosy areas available in all rooms. Activities and equipment were available on appropriate shelving for the age range of children. For example, in the Nest and Caterpillar rooms there were only low-level shelves for the children's toys and activities. The children across all rooms sampled were able to independently access toys, games, books and sensory items. The home corners in each of the care rooms were equipped with a range of materials which included food, cutlery and dining items. There were also babies, buggies and clothes available. The inspectors observed the children enjoying the outdoor play areas to the rear of the service and attached to some rooms. The outdoor areas had artificial grass surfacing, and the larger areas had wooden and plastic climbing structures and slides. A variety of slides and ride on and push toys were available in the younger play areas attached to the rooms.

### 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 service had a secure entrance to the service with a buzzer system and keypad locks in place. This prevented any unauthorised access to the service and exit from the service by children.
- Blind cords were secured and were not accessible to children.
- Cleaning agents and medications were stored out of the reach of children.
- On the inspector's initial walk around in the service children were observed taking part in tabletop activities in each room. Children were observed to be able to sit comfortably and safely in the chairs provided.

#### Infection Control:

- The inspectors observed a sample of nappy changing which supported effective infection control. The inspector observed that staff members followed the service's procedure which included a new apron and gloves for each change and staff members and children's hands were washed. These procedures were completed before the child was returned to the care room and demonstrated that the service had kept in place the preventive measures following the last inspection.
- Children's soothers were observed to be stored in individually labelled containers.

- Children had individually labelled cots/beds for sleep with their own sheets available.
- The service was visually clean, and staff members discussed cleaning schedules for the service. The Housekeeper was observed in the service, completing cleaning of the communal areas during the inspection.

### Safe Sleep:

- The inspectors observed staff members completing the 10-minute sleep checks on children under and over 2 years old. The staff members recorded the children position, breathing and colour and were able to explain these safe sleep procedures to inspectors. Children under two were provided with cellular blankets for sleep and comforters were removed from sleeping children. The temperature of the cot room and the care room for sleep was below 20°C. Staff members spoken with were aware of measures to take to cool rooms as required and there were active cooling measures in place.

### Non-Compliance Information

#### Fire Safety:

1. An IAN was issued to the registered providers on the day of inspection in relation to the location of a cot in the Nest and Caterpillar sleep rooms. A cot in each room impeded the evacuation of the room in the event of an emergency. It is acknowledged that both of these cots were on wheels. The staff in the service responded on the day of inspection and removed a cot from The Caterpillar room and re arranged the cots in the Nest sleep room. A written response received on the day of inspection confirmed that the removal of the cot did not impact children's need for a cot for sleep and there was sufficient space between the cots when rearranged in the Nest sleep room.

#### General Safety:

2. The registered provider did not ensure that medication required for a child was in date in the event of an emergency. A child attending the service was prescribed an auto-injector adrenaline pen for specific use in the event of an emergency. The auto- injector pen provided by the child's parents, which was stored in the service for use in the event of an emergency had expired. The expiry date on the auto- injector pen was dated April 2025.

#### Infection Control:

3. Effective infection control measure were not in place to support the reduction of cross contamination.
  - The inspector observed that children in The Nest were not provided with plates for their sandwiches and the children ate them off the tables.

- Mouthed toys were not removed from play once children had placed them in their mouths. These toys were left on the floor and observed to be accessible for play following children’s snack, sleep and dinner. The service’s infection control policy which referenced mouthed toys did not support staff in the procedure for effectively dealing and cleaning these toys.

### Action submitted by the Registered Provider

#### Corrective & Preventive Action

##### Fire Safety:

1. The registered provider stated in their corrective and preventive action plan the immediate corrective actions taken on the day of inspection as observed by the inspectors which included the relocation of the cot to the opposite side of the room in the Nest sleep room. This ensured that the emergency exit was no longer obstructed. The evacuation plan was updated to reflect the corridor door as the designated exit for this room. In Sleep Room 3 (Caterpillar) the cot located behind the door, which impeded full opening, was also on wheels and was removed entirely. This ensured a clear and accessible exit route in case of emergency. The inspector also received photographic evidence alongside a written confirmation that sleep needs of children remained met immediately following the inspection. As a preventive action the registered provider has stated that there is a weekly audit checklist which now includes verification of cot placement and evacuation route accessibility. Staff training was completed on 28/05/2025 and a fire drill was carried out and all staff were re-trained on evacuation procedures, including proper cot positioning and maintaining clear exit routes. An updated evacuation plan is in place for the Nest Sleep room and the evacuation route has been reviewed and revised and is clearly displayed. The room leader and manager conduct weekly walk-throughs to ensure compliance with evacuation route requirements and layout protocols.

##### General Safety:

2. The registered provider stated that two new pens are now in the service. A request had been made prior to the inspection, and this was followed up after the inspection. An oversight had occurred due to a staff member being on extended leave and there are now updated internal procedures to ensure continuity in this responsibility. As a preventive action it was stated that a monthly check of all medications, including expiry dates, has been introduced and recorded on a Medication Monitoring Log is in place. A named staff member is responsible for this check and reporting any upcoming expiries at least two months in advance. There is also a formal procedure is in place to notify parents, via email, at least one month before a medication’s expiry to ensure timely replacement.

### Infection Control:

- The registered provider stated that the staff in the room were respectfully reminded of the requirement to use the plates provided for all food items, including sandwiches, in accordance with our Infection Control Policy and instructed to provide plates at all times going forward. All staff were reminded of procedures around mouthed toys, including their prompt removal from shared areas, cleaning, and appropriate storage until sanitised. As a preventive action the classroom daily checklist has been updated to include verification of availability of plates for all meals and procedures for cleaning of mouthed toys.

### Supporting documentation submitted

#### Fire Safety:

Evacuation plans  
Sleep room layouts

#### General Safety:

Medication expiry sheet  
Photograph of new epi pens

#### Infection Control:

Daily checklist sheet

### Summary Comment

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

### 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 registered provider ensured that a person trained in a First Aid Responder (FAR) course was available. On review of the documentation there were six staff members available with in-date FAR certification. It is also acknowledged that all other staff members had valid training in paediatric first aid.
- (2) The first aid equipment available in the service provided adequate resources in the event of a first aid emergency. First Aid boxes were available in rooms and throughout the service. The location of each was conspicuous and easily accessible to staff members.

### Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

#### Regulation 29 - Premises

*A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-*  
*(a) of sound and stable structure,*  
*(c) kept adequately lit, heated and ventilated.*

#### Compliance Information

(c) Following the last inspection in May 2025 the ventilation in the Butterfly and Bumblebee rooms was working. The ventilation in the Nest and Caterpillar changing areas was also observed to be working effectively. The lighting in the children's sleep rooms and care rooms was able to be dimmed for sleep. There was soft lighting available during sleep to allow staff to complete sleep checks effectively.