

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015MH054
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Name of Service:	Fonthill Lodge Childcare
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Address of Service:	Main Street, Clonee, Co. Meath
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Eircode:	D15 XT73
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Name of Registered Provider:	Conor Lynch, Maurice Lynch
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	18/05/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	123	PM	94
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate 180-189 Lakeshore Drive, Airside Business Park, Swords, Co Dublin.
Inspection undertaken by:	N McEndoo and E Saini
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).

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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 33 staff employed by the registered providers. 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 29 staff members who work directly with the children, and a cook who works in the kitchen full-time.

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. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

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The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9, 11, 19,23, and 28. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under Regulation 19 Health Welfare and Development of Child. As a result, the scope of the inspection included, The Purple Room, The Nest, The Caterpillars, The Owls, Orange Room, Butterfly Room, Bumblebees, Yellow Room and Green Room.

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*

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(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.

Compliance Information

(1)

The registered provider ensured that.

(a) There was a designated person in charge and a named adult to deputise in their absence.

(b) The designated person in charge was available on the premises throughout the period of inspection.

(c) There was 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.

(2)

Following a review of previous inspection information, information available on inspection and discussion with the person in charge it was determined that eight new staff members had been employed since the previous inspection. In addition, Garda vetting for seven staff member whose disclosure was identified as due for renewal was requested for review.

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The eight files for new staff were reviewed, and the following information was noted.

- (a) Twelve written validated references from past employers for eight of the adults.
- (b) Four written validated references from a reputable source for five of the adults.
- (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for eight staff. The service also demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.
- (d) Police vetting from the police authorities in another state was available for seven adults who had lived outside the state for a period of six consecutive months or more.

(3)

The procedures specified above in paragraph (2) were carried out prior to any person being appointed, assigned or allowed access to or contact with a child attending the pre-school service.

(4)

Seven of the adult files reviewed evidenced they held a major award at level 5 or above in early childhood care and education on the national qualification framework, or qualifications deemed by the Department of Children, Disability and Equality (DCDE) to meet the regulatory requirement.

Non-Compliance Information

The following information was not available on the day of inspection.

- (4) It was not possible to evidence if a major award at level 5 or above, had been obtained in the case of one staff member.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The official QQI certificate now since been obtained. Employees who have completed a qualification but are awaiting their official QQI certificate will not be employed until the official QQI award has been received and verified.

Supporting documentation submitted

Copy of qualification submitted.

Summary Comment

The actions and evidence submitted have been reviewed. The non-compliances identified under Regulation 9 have been adequately addressed.

Part III – Management and Staff

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Regulation 11 - Staffing levels

(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

(8)(a)

The registered provider ensured that there were always at least two adults on the premises when children were present in the service.

Non-Compliance Information

(2) The minimum adult to child ratio was not maintained in the Bumble Bees room, on the day of the inspection. At 10:01am, one qualified staff member was present with 9 children. The children present were aged 2-3 years old and were being cared for on a full day care basis. Two qualified staff members were required.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

The registered provider has confirmed that at the time referred to in the inspection report, one educator was supporting a child with toilet training.

On receipt of the report all employees were reminded that temporary toileting support should be called for. To prevent reoccurrence a review of the procedures took place. The procedures have been strengthened to ensure ratios are always met while continuing to meet children's individual care needs.

Supporting documentation submitted

Copy of toilet training log submitted.

Copy of communication signed by all staff regarding understanding of procedures.

Summary Comment

The actions and evidence submitted have been reviewed. The non-compliances identified under Regulation 11 have been adequately addressed.

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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*
- (b) appropriate and suitable care practices are in place in the pre-school service, having regard to the number of children attending the service and the nature of their needs.*

Compliance Information

(1)(a)(b) The following observations are examples of how each child's learning, development and well-being with appropriate and suitable care practices were facilitated within the service.

Basic Needs

- The service promoted healthy eating. Food was provided through a combination of parents providing snacks for the older children and the service providing the remainder of the meals. Children's drinks were available to them in each room throughout the day, within their reach, should they feel thirsty during the day.
- Individual inclusion plans were implemented in line with the child's own needs. The approaches included the interventions needed by the staff to always ensure the child's learning and development in the service across all developmental areas.
- An individual care plan was available for a child with a food allergy. Staff were aware of signs of a reaction to exposure and what interventions were required if needed.
- The individual sleep needs of younger children were met, and this was observed on the day by children sleeping at various intervals. Older pre-school children were facilitated with a scheduled rest period in the afternoon. For children who did not require a sleep, appropriate quiet rest facilities were available in the care rooms and children were observed spending time in this area for short periods of rest throughout the day.
- Nappy changing was carried out regularly and promptly when required and was handled in a positive and sensitive manner. The staff members were observed speaking to children during this time, using it as an opportunity for one-to-one interaction.

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- Children were observed to use the toilet independently with staff remaining close by for support if required.
- Children from each care room had access to the substantial outdoor environment. Ensuring access to fresh air while supporting their social, cognitive, gross and fine motor developmental. Each area was laid out with appropriate equipment for its age group.

Supporting Relationships

- The interactions between the staff and children were kind, caring and positive in nature.
- Staff were aware of supporting children with additional needs and ensured inclusivity within the setting.
- Staff supported children to engage positively with one another, and the children were encouraged to engage in play activities that required turn taking and sharing.

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:

- On arrival to the service the main entrance was observed to be locked. The service had a secure entrance to the service with a buzzer system in place. This prevented any unauthorised access to the service and exit from the service by children.
- Materials were observed to be in a good state of repair.
- Warm running water was available for hand washing at a temperature below 43°C.
- The outdoor area was secured with tall fencing and a bolted gate to the rear. Each area was further subdivided to facilitate safety of the different age groups.

Infection Control:

- The materials and resources throughout the service were visually clean.
- Tables and highchairs were observed to be cleaned prior to and after mealtimes in both care rooms.
- Foot operated pedal bins were available within the service for safe disposal of waste.

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- There was adequate handwashing facilities provided throughout the service with warm water, liquid soap and paper towels. Younger children's hands were washed by the adult present, while older children were observed to wash their hands with support, before snacks, meals and after nappy changing.
- Aprons and gloves were available and observed in use by staff when changing of a child was required.

Administration of Medication:

- When discussed, staff were aware of their responsibilities for the safe administration of medication. No medication was observed to be administered on the day of inspection.

Safe Sleep:

- The service had designated sleep rooms with appropriate cots available to children.
- Sleep checks were observed to occur every ten minutes. Where required staff were observed to remain present in the sleep room while the children slept.

Fire Safety:

- Fire evacuation procedures were clearly displayed in the care rooms.
- Fire extinguishers were on the premises and easily accessible.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. Grapes within a child's lunchbox were observed not to be cut in half, increasing the risk of choking to the child. It is acknowledged the staff member implemented measures to mitigate the risk when brought to their attention.
2. An emergency medication stored in the yellow room had passed its expiry and remained available for use, this posed a potential risk of delayed medical treatment in the event of an emergency.
3. The inspectors observed that the full height glazed doors and windows within the service did not have visibility strips or safety markings positioned at the children's eye level. The absence of these markings reduced the visibility of the glass panels and increased the likelihood of children inadvertently colliding into the glass surface.

Infection Control:

4. In the orange room a low-level cupboard storing cleaning chemicals was not secured by a lock and was accessible to children.
5. Mouthed toys were observed not removed from play once children had placed them in their mouths. These toys were left on the floor or table and observed to be accessible to other children present. This was not in accordance with the service's infection control policy.

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Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

The registered provider confirmed that findings on inspection were brought to the attention of staff. Assurances were given by management that regular checks and audits will take place to prevent reoccurrence. Staff will further be periodically reminded of procedures through staff meetings and supervisions.

General Safety:

1. All employees were reminded that grapes present in children's lunchboxes from home must be cut in half. Communication was sent to all current ECCE parents requesting that grapes be cut prior to including in lunchboxes. To prevent reoccurrence, grapes will be prohibited in the service beginning with the September intake of new ECCE children.
2. The emergency medication identified in the Yellow Room was removed from the service following confirmation from the Child's parents that it was no longer required.
3. Visibility safety markings have been applied to all glass panels.

Infection Control:

4. The cleaning chemicals stored in the low-level cupboard in the Orange Room were removed and relocated to the high-level cupboard. Daily room safety checklists have been updated to reflect safe storage of chemicals.
5. Staff were reminded of the Infection Prevention and Control Policy in relation to mouthed toys.

Supporting documentation submitted

Copy of Email communications to parents and staff submitted.

Copy of communication signed by all staff regarding understanding of procedures.

Summary Comment

The actions and evidence submitted have been reviewed. The non-compliances identified under Regulation 23 have been adequately addressed.

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 adequate insurance was in place for the full day care service for 160 children up until 27 March 2027.

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