

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015LS061
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Name of Service:	Sonas Mountmellick Community Childcare Ltd
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Address of Service:	MDA Business Park, Irishtown, Mountmellick, Co. Laois
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Eircode:	R32 YA40
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Name of Registered Provider:	Paul Dempsey
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Date of Inspection:	18/06/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	101	PM	75
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Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate Child and Family Agency Primary Care Centre Church Avenue Tullamore Co Offaly R35 K1W4
Inspection undertaken by:	R Flynn A Spain
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

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. 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 in building 1. The baby room has direct access to a kitchenette, nappy changing area and sleep room. A second sleep room is located on the ground floor. A purpose-built stainless-steel kitchen with an open hatch facing into the hall is located in the main corridor.

Pre-school room 1 and 4 and a sleep room for children over the age of two, are located on the first floor of building 1.

Preschool 2 and 3 are located in the adjoining building, known as the Museum. One preschool room and a lobby area to hang children's coats and bags are provided. A covered outdoor passage links the museum building and the main building. Outdoor play areas are located to the sides and back of the premises.

Staffing

The registered provider employs thirty-seven adults to work in the service. Thirty staff members were present in the service on the day of inspection, this included

- twenty-four childcare staff working directly with the children,
- four ancillary staff which included three cooks and one cleaner,
- One staff member employed via a CE Scheme.
- The person in charge.

The registered provider does not work directly in the service with the children. The person in charge facilitated the inspection.

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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 11 (1)(2)(8)(a) – Staffing levels,
- Regulation 15 – Record of preschool child,
- Regulation 16 – Record in relation to preschool service,
- Regulation 19 (1)(a) – Health, welfare and development of child,
- 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.

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

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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.

Statutory Notices

Notice	Date Served	Detail
Improvement Notice IN3542	18/06/2026	The temperature in the upstairs sleep room where children aged 2-3 were sleeping was above the recommended temperature.
Status	The person in charge submitted a written response with corrective and preventive actions which were accepted by the inspectorate.	

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 9 – Management and recruitment

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that-

- (a) the service has a designated person in charge and a named person who is able to deputise as required,*
- (b) at all times during the period when the pre-school service is being carried on, the designated person in charge or the named person referred to in subparagraph (a) is on the premises, and*
- (c) there is a clear management structure in the service that identifies the lines of authority and accountability in the service and the specific roles and responsibilities of each employee and unpaid worker.*

(2) A registered provider shall ensure that each employee, unpaid worker and contractor is suitable and competent taking into consideration the nature of the needs of children, including by-

- (a) consideration of references from the person's past employers, if any, and in particular the most recent employer, if any,*
- (b) consideration of references from reputable sources in the case of a person who has no past employers,*
- (c) consideration of the vetting disclosure received from the National Vetting Bureau of the Garda Síochána in accordance with the Act of 2012 in respect of the person, and*
- (d) ensuring, insofar as is practicable, that where a person has lived in a state other than the State for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months, he or she provides police vetting from the police authorities in that state.*

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

(4) A registered provider shall ensure that, without prejudice to the generality of paragraph (2) and subject to paragraphs (5) and (6), each employee working directly with children attending the service holds at least a major award in Early childhood Care and Education at Level 5 on the National Qualifications Framework or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

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.

(c)

There was a clear management structure in the service that identified the lines of authority and accountability,

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this information was also displayed in the entrance hall of the service.

(2)

Following a review of previous inspection information, information available on inspection and discussion with the registered provider it was determined that five new staff members had commenced in the service since the last inspection on the 21 August 2025. The staff files of three newly employed childcare staff, the CE staff member and the registered provider were reviewed and the following was noted;

(a)

Two written validated references were available from a previous employer.

(c)

Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for new staff members. However, the service did not adhere to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice in regard to one staff member, 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 newly employed staff member who had lived outside the state for a period of longer than six consecutive months as an adult.

(4)

Three new childcare 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)(b)

- Five written validated references from a past employer or from a source other than a previous employer were not available in respect of three new staff members.
- Three written references available in respect of two staff members were not validated.

(3)

The procedures specified in paragraph (2)(b) had not been completed prior to five staff members being appointed, assigned or allowed access to or contact with children.

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Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(2)(b)

Five written validated references in respect of three new staff members have been obtained.

Three written references which were not validated have now been validated for two staff members.

(3)

All references will be validated prior to new staff starting. A policy stating that written references must be provided and validated prior to new staff starting employment, has been added to updated policy documents.

Supporting documentation submitted

References received by the inspectorate.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 9(2)(b)(3) has been adequately addressed.

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.

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Compliance Information

(1)

An adequate number of adults were working directly with the children. Twenty four childcare staff members were working directly with the children.

(2)

Morning

- There were four adults providing direct care to sixteen children aged between 1-2 years in the Baby room.
- There were four adults providing direct care to twelve children aged between 2-3 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 four adults providing direct care to eighteen children aged between 2-3 and a half years in the preschool 1 room.
- There were three adults providing direct care to sixteen children aged between 4-5 years in the preschool 2 room.
- There were three adults providing direct care to sixteen children aged between 4-5 years in the preschool 3 room.
- There were two adults providing direct care to nine children aged between 4-5 years in the preschool 4 room.

Afternoon

- There were four adults providing direct care to thirteen children aged between 1-2 years in the Baby room.
- There were four adults providing direct care to eleven children aged between 2-3 years in the Wobbler room.
- There were four adults providing direct care to eleven children aged between 2-3 years in the Toddler room.
- There were four adults providing direct care to sixteen children aged between 2-3 and a half years in the preschool 1 room.
- There were three adults providing direct care to twenty-four children aged between 4-5 years in the preschool 2 room.

(8)(a)

There were at least two adults on the premises at all times for the duration of the Inspection.

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Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 15 – Record of pre-school child

(1) A registered provider of a pre-school service other than a pre-school service in a drop-in centre or a temporary pre-school service shall ensure that a record in writing is kept in respect of each pre-school child attending the service containing the following particulars:

- (a) the name and date of birth of the child;*
- (b) the date on which the child first attended the service;*
- (c) the date on which the child ceased to attend the service;*
- (d) the name and address of a parent or guardian of the child and a telephone number where that parent or guardian or a relative or friend of the child can be contacted during the hours of operation of the service;*
- (e) authorisation for the collection of the child;*
- (f) details of any illness, disability, allergy or special need of the child, together with all the information relevant to the provision of special care or attention;*
- (g) the name and telephone number of the child's registered medical practitioner;*
- (h) record of immunisations, if any, received by the child;*
- (i) written parental consent for appropriate medical treatment of the child in the event of an emergency.*

Compliance Information

A sample of 12 records were reviewed. The person in charge ensured that a record in writing was kept of the details relating to (a) to (i) of the above regulation for all the records reviewed.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 16 – Record in relation to pre-school service

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of the following information in relation to the service:

- (a) the name, position, qualifications and experience of the person in charge and of every other employee, unpaid worker and contractor;*
- (b) details of the class of service and the age profile of children for which the service is registered to provide services;*
- (c) details of the adult:child ratios in the service;*

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- (d) the type of care or programme provided in the service;*
- (e) the facilities available;*
- (f) the opening hours and fees;*
- (g) the policies, procedures and statements the service is required to maintain in accordance with Regulation 10;*
- (h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis;*
- (i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;*
- (j) details of any medication administered to a pre-school child attending the service with signed parental consent;*
- (k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.*

Compliance Information

(1)

The service kept and maintained written records of information in relation to the service in an Information Booklet in accordance with Regulation 16 (1)(a)(b)(c)(d)(e)(f)(g).

(h)

The attendance records of children were recorded on an electronic application in each preschool room at the time of children entering and leaving the service.

(i)

A roster was in place and reflected the adults working in the service.

Non-Compliance Information

(j)

A sample of medication administration records were not available for inspection. Medication administration is recorded on an electronic application however, the person in charge and staff could not retrieve previous completed records from the electronic application.

(k)

A sample of 28 accident and incidents records were reviewed. Two records were not signed by two staff members, and two further records had no signature from a parent/guardian.

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Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(j)

A new medicine administration book has been purchased for the service. The administration of medication is now logged and stored in the service and can be accessed at any time.

(k)

All missing signatures have been obtained from previous incident reports. The issue has been addressed to all staff at a meeting following the inspection and going forward accident reports will be also signed by manager or assistant manager.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photograph of new medicine administration record book viewed.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliances identified under Regulation 16(j)(k) have been adequately addressed.

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 of children

Meals and snacks were provided by the service. Food was freshly prepared and cooked by an onsite cook. The main hot meal served on the day of inspection was ham, potatoes and vegetables. Children in the Wobbler room used highchairs and low tables and chairs for eating. Children in the Toddler room sat at low tables eating together, staff also sat with the children, engaging the children in conversation. Children in the Baby room were supported to feed in highchairs. Individual drink bottles were provided by the staff during mealtimes. Bibs were put on babies for feeding. Children in preschool 3 were observed to line up for hand washing before their meal. Children were observed to finish their meal and drink of milk at individual pace and were praised for taking their plastic plates and beakers to the kitchenette when finished eating.

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Sanitary accommodation was available to the children directly off the preschool rooms and children were supervised when accessing the toilet during the inspection. Nappy changing facilities were available on the ground floor off the Baby room. Nappy changing procedures were carried out on a routine basis and more frequently if required.

Children in the Baby room were observed to move freely around the room, climbing on the vinyl mats located on the floor with equipment and books. Children in preschool 3 were observed to enjoy playing with modelling clay, tea sets, blocks and a toy garage. A staff member was observed to sit at each table with the children and engage in friendly conversation with the children. In preschool 4, children were observed to enjoy dancing to music, playing in the sandbox, making jigsaws and engaging in pretend play with dolls and a tea set in the room. Children in the Toddler room were observed sitting at tables with staff reading books.

Adequate cots and floor beds were available, and children were accommodated to sleep according to their individual requirements. Two sleep rooms with cots were available for children from the baby room, wobbler room and toddler room. Low level beds were available for older children from the Toddler room who required a nap. Rest areas were in each preschool room and included low-level couches and soft vinyl floor mats and cushions.

Supporting relationships

Family walls and birthday walls were on display in the preschool rooms, helping the children feel connected to home. Communication with parents regarding the children's day to day learning and activities were recorded on an electronic application which parents had access to. Individual learning journals were maintained in the service to show case the children's learning journey in the service and for take home at year end. Parents and carers were observed to enter the premises and collect children from the preschool rooms throughout the day.

Physical and material environment

The preschool rooms were laid out to facilitate free movement with various interest areas throughout. A kitchen area with play equipment, vehicles, sensory toys were available to the children. A rest area was in each preschool room with vinyl mats, cushion and armchairs for reading and resting throughout the day. Musical instruments, building blocks, jigsaws and musical instruments were positioned on open accessible shelves for children to select toys of their choice to play with.

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Non-Compliance Information

(1)(a)

Children did not have access to a drink for the duration of the day in the service. Children were provided with a drink of water during or after their dinner and snacks, however, no water was left in the preschool rooms between meals. A water jug with cups or individual water bottles should be accessible to children throughout the day for use when children feel thirsty, particularly in the summer months.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

Parents have been asked provide water bottles for children. These bottles will be stored in the child's room, washed each evening and refilled every day the child is in.

Supporting documentation submitted

Copy of message sent to parents viewed.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 19(1)(a) has been adequately addressed.

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 entrance 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 rooms and accessing the outdoor play area.

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The preschool rooms had 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 available in the children's sanitary accommodation throughout the service.

Clean sheets for low level beds and cots were individually labelled and stored on shelves. A roster was in place for washing of sheets for each preschool room.

Low level beds for use by children from the toddler room and preschool rooms were individually labelled with the children's names for use. Each cot had vinyl wipeable mattresses.

A fridge was available in the kitchen area of the baby room for the storage of bottles of milk and water.

Sooters were stored in individual labelled containers. A steriliser was available in the kitchen area off the baby room for the sterilising of babies sooters.

Administration of Medication:

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. Medication was not given on the day of inspection.

Safe Sleep:

Appropriate sleep equipment was used for children who required sleep. Children aged between 1 and 2 years old from the Baby and Wobbler rooms were provided with a cot while older children age 2 years and above, from the Toddler room slept on low level beds. Two sleep rooms were located downstairs; one had fifteen cots and the second had 10. A log was maintained in the Baby and Wobbler sleep room downstairs to record the room temperature while children slept. The temperature in the downstairs sleep room was recorded at 21.1°C – 21.8°C. Sleep checks were conducted by the staff every 10 minutes and recorded on a tablet. Children in preschool 1 and 4 were observed to sleep on low level beds in the rooms while staff remained with the children to monitor the children while sleeping.

Fire Safety:

All fire exits were clear of obstruction and clearly marked. The fire assembly point was located in the outdoor play area. Staff members were familiar with fire safety evacuation procedures from the service and could demonstrate fire exit routes.

Outing:

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The person in charge advised that annual outings occur to Kildare Farm Foods. Permission slips were signed by a parent for an upcoming outing planned for 23 June. An outings policy and risk assessment were in place for future outings.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. The most recent Garda vetting disclosure presented in respect of one staff member was not dated within the previous three years in adherence with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice 'EYI-RN12.3 Renewal of Garda Vetting'.

Administration of Medication:

2. One child in the Wobbler room was on a medical care plan for an adrenaline auto injector, however, staff were not trained in the administration of the medication and were unclear as to the necessary actions to be taken to administer the adrenaline auto injector. This posed a risk to the child in a medical emergency and the staff not being aware of the procedure to follow in the event that the medication was required to be administered. This was at various to the services Medicine Management Policy which stated, 'Life Saving Medicine and Invasive Treatments such as EpiPens require proof of training in the administration of such medication'.

Safe Sleep:

3. See Statutory Notice section in relation to Improvement Notice IN3542 served.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. An updated Garda Vetting application was submitted for the staff member who's vetting was out of date. A database has been developed to ensure all vetting is renewed in time to ensure no gaps.

Administration of Medication:

2. Staff have been trained by a medical professional on the administration of auto injector medication.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

Copy of Garda Vetting application viewed.

Administration of Medication:

Details of medical professional who provided training received.

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Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions taken and evidence submitted. The non-compliance identified under Regulation 23 remains outstanding until a copy of the processed vetting disclosure has been submitted to the inspectorate.

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)

Nine staff members were qualified in First Aid response (FAR) and available on the premises for the hours of operation.

(2)(a)(b)

Suitably equipped first aid boxes were located on high level shelving in the preschool rooms and in areas which were 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 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.

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Compliance Information

(1)(a)

The service maintained a record of fire drills conducted in the service. The last monthly fire drill was recorded on 10 May 2026.

(b)

The maintenance record for the firefighting equipment confirmed that an annual service was conducted in May 2026. The maintenance record for the smoke alarm system confirmed that a service was conducted on 8 July 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.