

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015WD063
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Name of Service:	Passage East Childcare Initiative
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Address of Service:	Crooke Road, Passage East, Co. Waterford
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Eircode:	X91 D620
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Name of Registered Provider:	Helen Millea
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Service type:	Full Day, Part Time, Sessional
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Dates of Inspection:	21/01/2026
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Date 2 of Inspection:	22/01/2026
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No of pre-school children:	AM	17	PM	11
Day 2	AM	18	PM	9

Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Community Care Centre, HSE Buildings, Cork Road, Waterford City.
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Inspection undertaken by:	E Cullen
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Title:	Early Years Inspector
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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

Passage East Childcare Initiative is a community service based in the village of Passage East in Co. Waterford. The building is purposely built adjacent to the national school. There are two care rooms, staff and children's toilets and a nappy changing area. There is a secure outdoor area at side of the premises. The service is registered to operate from 8:00 to 17:30, 5 days a week for 10 months of the year. The service caters for children aged between 2 years and 6 years old. A School Aged service is also provided onsite. The service is currently operating the preschool room only, and the toddler room is closed in preparation for building works due to commence. Children from the toddler room have been temporarily relocated to a nearby community building.

Staffing

There were six staff employed on the day of the inspection, including the person in charge and a student. The registered provider does not 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 child/ safety. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9– Management and Recruitment, 10 - Policies, procedures etc. of pre-school service, 11– Staffing levels, 19 - Health, welfare and development of child,

and 23- Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child, however, on inspection additional non-compliance which posed a risk was identified under Regulation 25 - First Aid and 31 – Notification of Incidents. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 10 and 19. As a result, the scope of the inspection included the preschool 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.

Additional Information

This inspection was triggered on foot of information received by the Early Years Inspectorate.

An Immediate Action notice was issued to the registered provider on 22 January 2026 in relation to sleep practices observed on day one of inspection. Further information can be found under Regulation 23 - Safe Sleep below. A response was received from the registered provider on 23 January 2026 which addressed the non-compliance.

Acknowledgments

The inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, person in charge, staff and children who were present on the days of the inspection.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 9 – Management and recruitment

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that-

- (a) the service has a designated person in charge and a named person who is able to deputise as required,*
- (b) at all times during the period when the pre-school service is being carried on, the designated person in charge or the named person referred to in subparagraph (a) is on the premises, and*

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

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

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

(7) A registered provider shall ensure that all employees, unpaid workers and contractors are appropriately supervised and provided with appropriate information, and where necessary training, including in relation to the following:

- (a) the policies, procedures and statements of the service specified in Schedule 5;*

Compliance Information

(2) Documentation was reviewed for four staff members who had commenced employment in the service since the last inspection and one work placement student.

(a)(b) Two validated references were available for each staff member from either a past employer, or from a reputable source.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all staff and a student. 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 one staff member who had lived outside the state for a period over 6 months.

(4) Certificates of qualification were available on file demonstrating that three staff members held a qualification at the minimum level 5 and above on the National Framework of Qualifications.

Non-Compliance Information

(1) (a)(b) On arrival at the service on day one of the inspection the named designated person in charge was rostered off and staff members present could not confirm who the assigned deputy designated person in charge was. It is acknowledged that the designated person in charge was present on day two of the inspection and clarified arrangements for deputy designated person in charge.

(2) (a)(b) Two validated references were not available for a student on a work experience programme from either a past employer, or from a reputable source.

(4) On review of records available, it could not be determined if an international certificate of qualification for one staff member met the minimum qualification requirements as detailed by the minister.

(7)(a) The service had no system in place to confirm that staff members had received information on the service's policies and procedures. On day one of the inspection staff members and the registered provider were unable to locate the service policies. Policies were available on day two of inspection.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

(1)(a)(b) Unfortunately on the day in question the person in charge was absent. Since this matter was brought to the registered providers attention, we are now making sure that nominated person in charge is aware of her duties.

(2)(a)(b) We will request references going forward prior to commencement.

(4) We have notified DCDE and requested clarification regarding Qualifications.

(7) All policies and procedure are being reviewed at the moment. Copies will be given to all staff. Staff were aware the policy folder was in the press. New policies are being drawn up and all existing staff and new staff will be given a copy. They will also sign that they have read and understood same.

Supporting documentation submitted

Letter of equivalency for qualification.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted and along with information gathered on day two of inspection. The findings of noncompliance identified under this regulation have been adequately addressed.

Part III – Management and Staff

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

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

Compliance Information

There were written policies, procedures and statements, as specified in Schedule 5, available for the service. The policies reviewed for this inspection were the following: policy on managing behaviour, policy on accidents and incidents, policy on infection control, policy on staff absences, policy on recruitment and policy on staff training. These policies and procedures were appropriate and specific to the setting.

Non-Compliance Information

On review of the service policies and procedures the following contained information which was inadequate:

1. Safe Sleep: The policy stated that a “staff member may remain in the room where children are sleeping. If there is no staff member in the room, the staff have visibility of the children through a viewing panel...”. Intermittent supervision is not sufficient to safeguard children sleeping on floor beds.
2. Healthy Eating: The policy did not state a requirement for children attending the service for Full Day Care over five hours to have a hot meal provided.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

1. Safe Sleeping: A staff member will remain in the room when children are sleeping/resting. The staff member on duty will record in the Sleep Log all staff have been informed of their duties.

2. Healthy eating: We have notified parent and included requirements for children attending for Full Day Care over five hours must have a hot meal. We have also put this in our newsletter to all parents.

Supporting documentation submitted

Safe sleep and healthy eating policies. Parents newsletter.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The noncompliance identified under this regulation 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,

Compliance Information

(2) On day two of inspection the staff to child ratios were maintained as follows; there were 18 children aged 3 to 6 years old being cared for by 4 staff at 10:40 and 9 children aged 3 to 6 years and 10 school aged children being cared for by 4 staff at 15:00.

Non-Compliance Information

(1) The registered provider had not ensured that an adequate number of adults were working with the children as reported under 11(2).

The minimum staff to child ratios were not observed as follows on day one of the inspection:

(2) There were not adequate staff members working directly with preschool children at the following times:

- At 12:42 there were 17 preschool children aged 3 to 6 years with 2 adults, where 3 were required.
- At 14:43 there were 11 preschool children aged 3 to 6 years and 11 school aged children with 2 adults, where 3 were required.
- At 14:50 there were 10 preschool children aged 3 to 6 years and 11 school aged children with 2 adults, where 3 were required.

(8)(a) There was only one staff member present onsite from 13:37 to 13:43 and 14:30 to 14:43, while the second staff member left the premises to collect school aged children. Two staff members are required onsite at all times during the hours of operation.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

We are ensuring the staff ratio is adhered to. On previous occasions one of our staff members always stayed on to do extra hours when needed, however on this occasion this did not occur.

This has been addressed will not happen again. If a staff member is off the manager will make sure ratio is met as per TUSLA requirements.

Supporting documentation submitted

None

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions submitted. The noncompliance identified under this regulation has been adequately addressed. Implementation will be assessed on next inspection.

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-

(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.

(2) A registered provider shall ensure that no corporal punishment is inflicted on a pre-school child whilst attending the service.

(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)(b) All food and drink was supplied by parents. Mealtimes observed were unhurried social experiences, staff sat with children and engaged in conversation about the food they were eating. The children were encouraged to retrieve their own snacks, feed themselves, tidy up after snack and assistance was provided if required. Children had free movement and choice of activities on the day and interactions between staff members and children were warm and reciprocal. Staff sat with children in small groups during activities such as baking and during free play.

(2)(3) The early years service had an appropriate behaviour management policy in place. Behaviour management practices observed on inspection were appropriate to the age and stage of development of the children attending the service. Staff members were observed to use behaviour management strategies such as positive reinforcement, redirection, offering alternatives and speaking with children at their level and supporting children to regulate their emotions. Staff described how they supported children with behaviour, including how they monitor any issues that arise and put a plan in place to support the child where appropriate.

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 main entrance door of the building was securely locked on the inspector's arrival and throughout the inspection days, to prevent unauthorised persons gaining entry or children exiting unsupervised. The kitchenette in the classroom was secured with a locked gate which was observed to be closed. All cleaning agents and hazardous materials were stored safely and out of reach of children in high level presses.

Seven accident and incident records were available from September 2025 to January 2026. These records were completed in detail and signatures confirmed that relevant parents, staff and a manager were informed.

The main classroom temperature was maintained between the required 18°C to 22°C. All tables and chairs used by children were in good condition and suitable for use by the age range of children using them. Equipment and materials used were appropriate for use by the age range of children using them.

Infection Control:

The service was clean and well maintained with cleaning schedules maintained daily by staff. Children were observed washing their hands before eating and after toileting. There was warm running water, liquid soap and paper hand towels available for hand washing throughout the service.

Non-Compliance Information

The below non-compliances were identified on day one of inspection:

General Safety:

- Hot meals supplied by parents were reheated in the service. Food probing to check temperature was not observed or documented for meals reheated to ensure meals had been sufficiently heated.

Infection Control:

- Perishable foods were stored in children's bags which were on shelves in the classroom, with the exception of the hot meal which some children had which was stored in the service refrigerator. Children retrieved snacks which included perishable foods directly from the shelves for morning snack at 11:00.

Safe Sleep:

3. An immediate action notice was issued to the service in relation to sleep practices observed on day one of the inspection. A child sleeping on a low-level floor bed was not supervised at all times as required. The child was placed to sleep in the designated sleep area separate to the main classroom, and frequent checks were completed by the staff members. However, the child was unsupervised between these checks.
4. While staff members were observed to complete and document the times of sleep checks, the child's position, colour, breathing or room temperature were not recorded.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

Hot meals supplied by parents have always been checked with probe and documented. This was discussed with staff members for not doing this on the day of the inspection. Going forward we will ensure all meals are checked with the probe and documented.

Infection Control:

Perishable food will be taken from children's bags and put in refrigerator as soon as the children come in every morning.

Safe Sleep:

As stated in Safe Sleep section staff were going by what they were told when completing safeguarding children course. We have now changed this practice as per amended Safe Sleep Policy.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

Healthy eating policy and food probe log.

Infection Control:

Healthy eating policy.

Safe Sleep:

Safe sleep policy and sleep logs.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions and evidence submitted. The noncompliance identified under this regulation has been adequately addressed. Implementation will be assessed on next 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

(2)(a)(b)

There was a suitably equipped first aid box stored in an overhead press and available for the use of the children attending the early years service.

Non-Compliance Information

(1)

A person certified in a recognised PHECC First Aid Response (FAR) was not available on the premises from 14:00hrs on day one of inspection. It is acknowledged that a staff member was trained in basic first aid and available to children from 14:00 to close. On day two of inspection, a FAR trained staff member was available.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

An additional staff member has been enrolled on a FAR course. We will ensure a FAR trained staff member is available at all times going forward.

Supporting documentation submitted

None.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions submitted. The noncompliance identified under this regulation have been adequately addressed. Implementation will be assessed on next inspection.

Part VIII - Notifications and Complaints

Regulation 31 - Notification of incidents

A registered provider shall notify the Agency in writing within 3 working days of becoming aware of any of the following incidents occurring in the preschool service:

- (c) an incident that occurs in the service and that results in the service being closed for any length of time;*
- (d) a serious injury to a pre-school child while attending the service that requires immediate medical treatment by a registered medical practitioner whether in a hospital or otherwise;*

Non-Compliance Information

The registered provider did not notify the Early Years Inspectorate of the following notifiable incidents:

- (c) January 2026: Where the service closed for a day due to heating issues.
- (d) September 2025: Incident where a child has a serious injury and required medical attention.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

Going forward we will notify TUSLA if we need to close due to no heating/no water or whatever reason.

We are now keeping a record of every minor accident in the accident book and will notify TUSLA of any major incidents/serious incidents.

Supporting documentation submitted

Accident book.

Summary Comment

The inspector has reviewed the actions submitted. The noncompliance identified under this regulation have been adequately addressed.