

Section 14 Education (Welfare) Act, 2000

**Assessment of Education
in places other than Recognised Schools**

**Independent School
Review Assessment Report**

Name of School	Alexandra College Junior School
Address	Upper Milltown Road, Dublin 6
Telephone	01- 4704617
Name of Principal/Director	Ms. Avril Lamplugh
Name of Assessor/s	Billy Lawlor Jane Merriman
Date of Assessment	27 th October 2022
Date of Final Report	15 th June 2023

Contents

Section 1	Background Information	3
1.1.	School Hours	3
1.2.	Name(s) of principal and/or other teacher(s) interviewed	3
1.3.	Sources of evidence on which report is based.....	3
Section 2	General Information and School Context	4
Section 3	The Principal and Staff	4
Section 4	Time Devoted to Education	5
Section 5	The Learning Environment.....	5
Section 6	The Educational Activities	5
6.1.	General information	5
6.2.	Language and literacy skills	6
6.3.	Numeracy	6
6.4.	Irish	7
6.5.	Other areas of learning	7
6.6.	Special educational needs	8
Section 7	Assessment and Record Keeping	8
Section 8	Other Relevant Information	8
Section 9	Evaluation of the Education Provision and Recommendations	9
Section 10	Discussion of Finding of Report with Principal	9
Section 11	Outcome	10

Section 1 Background Information

1.1. School Hours

Opening Time:	08:45		
Closing time:	15:00		
Main breaks during the day:	10:20	to	10:35
	11:55	to	12:35

Is school in operation for more than five years?

Yes	
00/00/0000	

If no, please give date on which school commenced operation

1.2. Name(s) of principal and/or other teacher(s) interviewed

(Normally interview should take place with the principal)

Ms Avril Lamplugh (principal) and the deputy principal

1.3. Sources of evidence on which report is based

This assessment report is based on the following sources of evidence:

- Information furnished in the annual update form R2 completed by the principal
- An interview with the principal and the deputy principal
- Classroom visits and interaction with classroom teachers
- Examination of a sample of learning tasks completed by the pupils
- Observation of the educational materials in use
- A reading of the school's website.

Section 2 General Information and School Context

Alexandra College Junior School is an independent fee-paying private school under the patronage of the Archbishop of Dublin and Glendalough. The school has a Church of Ireland patronage and the school's enrolment policy gives priority to pupils of the Church of Ireland faith. Pupils of other faiths and none are also enrolled. The school is situated in the parish of Milltown and caters for a diverse range of pupils. Most pupils come from the Dublin area but international pupils, including Ukrainian pupils, are also enrolled.

Both the primary school and the post-primary school are governed by an overall council for the college. The primary school has its own board of management which includes parent representation and representation from the post-primary board. This ensures close cooperation between all interested partners in the school's management and development.

Section 3 The Principal and Staff

Staffing at the school consists of an administrative principal teacher, a teaching deputy principal teacher, 14 other class teachers and two learning support teachers. The school also employs five specialist teachers who oversee lessons in French, Music, Art, Physical Education (PE) and STEAM which covers Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts and Mathematics. All permanent staff members are registered with the Teaching Council. The principal and deputy principal work in close co-operation with each other in the effective management of the curricular and administrative areas. Regular staff meetings are held. Staff members also engage on a continuous basis in professional development courses. This upskilling ensures that pupil education takes place in a progressive school environment that relates to the learning needs of the pupils. Teachers prepare weekly plans based on long-term curricular objectives. This practice ensures there is continuity in the programmes delivered.

The school enjoys the support of a very active parents' association. Parents are valued as partners in the education of their children and the relationship between the school and parents is characterised by open communication and transparency. This facilitates the development of positive relationships among staff members, pupils, and parents.

Section 4 Time Devoted to Education

The school operates a five-day week and is open from late August to mid-June. The school remained open on 175 days during the 2021-22 school year. The Junior School opens for early drop off at 08:00 and the school day starts at 08:30. The school day ends at 15:00. Morning break each day is from 10:20 until 10:35 for classes from junior infants to second class and from 10:35 to 10:50 for third class to sixth class. Lunch break is from 11:55 until 12:35 for the first group of classes and from 12:15 to 13:00 for the second group. An extensive range of extra-curricular activities and an aftercare programme take place from 15:00 to 18:00. Class timetables were submitted in the R2 school information documentation. Pupil attendance is closely monitored, and attendance levels are satisfactory. After-school care is made available to pupils.

Section 5 The Learning Environment

The school buildings comprise of thirteen classrooms, an assembly hall, a purpose-built gymnasium, a canteen, a staffroom, and administrative offices. There are also two outdoor play areas, outdoor green spaces, two hockey pitches and a tennis court available to the pupils. Pupils have access to a polytunnel where horticultural skills are cultivated.

The classrooms are modern and contain an array of resource materials and displays of pupils' work. The school has extensive information technology (IT) facilities and equipment. Junior pupils have access to iPads while the senior pupils use MacBooks. A dedicated IT support service is available to staff members and pupils.

Section 6 The Educational Activities

6.1. General information

The educational programme is based on a cross-disciplinary curriculum that attaches equal importance to academics, the visual and performing arts, music, and sport. The *Primary School Curriculum* informs much of the academic work in the school. In addition, the school provides its own extensive curriculum. This is provided by specialist teachers in areas such as French, Music, Art, Dance and Drama. Coding classes are also provided.

Learning experiences are grounded in the Froebel approach to lesson delivery. There is a recognition of the holistic view of each pupil's development, and this is reflected in the child-centred approach to teaching and learning. Parents and teachers work in partnership and harmony with each other. Mixed-age class family groups are formed within the school. The leadership of these groups is given to older pupils. This cultivates a sense of responsibility in these pupils while also ensuring that younger pupils feel that they are very much a part of the group.

6.2. Language and literacy skills

Language and literacy skills are competently developed through use of a variety of methodologies during classroom instruction. The content of lessons is guided by the language programme as promoted in the *Primary School Curriculum*. Reading skills are developed through use of the Froebelian approach known as family reading. This involves setting up a social and interactive environment that allows each pupil to read to other pupils and with a teacher. Pupils also share stories they have written themselves or illustrated books that they have created. This work complements the formal reading lessons that take place daily in the classroom.

The *Literacy Lift Off* programme is also used as is the *Drop Everything and Read* strategy. Literacy growth is guided and informed through use of the Star reading test to measure reading ability in this area. The results of standardised attainment tests and diagnostic tests also inform the approaches to development of pupil reading skills.

Provision is made in pupils' written work for the development of all the necessary skills to write fluently and creatively. Pupils regularly contribute to the *Alexpress*. A high standard of penmanship was observed in the presentation of work. There is a big emphasis on public speaking in the school programme. Pupils develop presentation skills in a range of debating and public speaking activities.

6.3. Numeracy

The teaching of mathematical skills and concepts in each classroom is supported by the availability and use of a range of appropriate resource materials. Maths stations are set up in each classroom to enable pupils to explore topics and skills and there is an emphasis on the enjoyment of Mathematics in the activities provided. In-class learning support is provided during lessons. All classes were actively involved in mathematical activities promoting interest in the subject during Mathematics Week. Early mathematical skills are also developed using the Numicon programme. The multi-sensory approach is used in this programme and is suited to all learning styles. The textbooks *Busy at Maths* and *Mental Maths* are used to support classroom instruction. The use of Mathematics in the environment is also highlighted and all classes are actively involved in projects and activities during Mathematics Week.

6.4. Irish

The school uses Gaelbhratach, a scheme which supports and encourages schools in their efforts to promote the Irish language. The primary aim of the scheme is to create a culture of speaking Irish informally within the school and beyond. This facilitates efforts to foster a positive attitude towards Irish among the pupils. Classes showed a willingness to engage informally with the assessor during the assessment visit. Use is made of commercially produced products such as *Bua na Cainte* and *Fuaimeanna agus Focail* to give a structure to the more formal classroom lessons. Pupils also have access to a range of reading material in this area.

There are Irish captains in each class whose role is to promote the use of the language in everyday activities. The committee is teacher led and includes class pupils.

An after-school Irish club is available to pupils to provide opportunities to develop speaking skills and to enhance their understanding of Irish culture.

Children attending an Independent School should be afforded opportunity for the study of Irish, however the study of Irish is not a requirement for registration under Section 14 of the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000. Where Irish is included in the provision, an Independent School may identify students attending that they consider would qualify for an exemption from the study of Irish. Independent Schools can make decisions in consultation with parents regarding arrangements for these children. Any arrangements made in relation to the study of Irish does not entitle students to an exemption from the study of Irish in the event of a subsequent enrolment at a Department of Education recognised school.

Parents of children attending an Independent School should be informed of and acquaint themselves with implications of not taking Irish and/or having a second language. Parents seeking information should consult with the Department of Education www.education.ie and/or the State Examinations Commission www.examinations.ie with regard to the requirement for Irish and/or an additional language.

6.5. Other areas of learning

Due care and attention are given to all other aspects of the Primary School Curriculum at each class level. The school supports the *Green School* initiative. Pupils are actively involved in developing their environmental awareness and activism through participation in committees and practical activities. The school has been the recipient of three green flags and is in the process of acquiring its fourth flag. All pupils benefit from the school's extensive sports facilities in Physical Education (PE) and a range of sports coaching in various disciplines is available. The Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) programme includes the delivery of the Stay Safe and the Relationship and Sexuality (RSE) programmes. On a practical level pupils engage in a considerable amount of community and parish work including volunteering with the Alex Guild which assists in supporting the welfare of elderly past pupils of the school. The school student council receives the active support of all pupils.

The school lays particular emphasis on giving the pupils a balanced experience of Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts, and Mathematics (STEAM). A specialist teacher is employed to support this area, and examples of work and projects were observed during the visit. The Arts aspect of STEAM also receives due recognition, and expert tuition is given in Music and Drama. Pupils have participated in the Mini Intel competition, science competitions, Lego league and the young engineer competition.

6.6. Special educational needs

Two learning support teachers deliver the learning support programme to pupils in need of additional specialist input. Diagnostic and attainment test results, along with class teacher reports, are used to identify the priority needs of pupils who would benefit from support. All resources are directed towards pupils with the greatest needs. The use of assistive technology is prominent in the delivery of programmes and particular emphasis is placed on teaching the Touch-type Read and Spell (TTRS) programme to pupils presenting with literacy difficulties. Pupils work individually or in small groups with the learning support teachers in the delivery of the programmes.

Section 7 Assessment and Record Keeping

A thorough pupil assessment programme is operated in the school. All teachers regularly assess pupils through class-based assessments. These assessments take place monthly from third to sixth class in English, Irish and Mathematics. Standardised attainment tests are administered from second class to sixth class annually and use is made in first class of the Drumcondra screening test. Administration of the Quest screening test takes place in first class. The administration of the STAR reading test begins in second class. Pupils also engage in self-assessment. School tests take place at Christmas and summer, and school reports are issued to the parents.

Detailed records are kept of pupil progress. Test results are used to inform curriculum programmes. On transfer to post-primary school reports on each sixth-class pupil are shared with that school.

Section 8 Other Relevant Information

The school's information also provided a number of policy and certification documents. The following is a summary of documents provided:

- School calendar and timetables
- Health and Safety policy statement
- Safeguarding and Welfare: all staff vetted by National Vetting Bureau
- Child Safeguarding statement as required by Child Care Act 2015
- Fire safety compliance certificate.
- Insurance arrangements.
- Food preparation.

Section 9 Evaluation of the Education Provision and Recommendations

In my opinion, the education provided to the pupils in Alexandra College Junior School can be characterised as '*a certain minimum education, moral, intellectual and social*'. The reasons I have formed this opinion of the educational provision in the school are as follows:

- The quality of leadership and management offered by the principal and deputy principal
- The range and variety of curricular provision available to the pupils
- The management of pupils at classroom level and the positive relations that are fostered in the school community
- The employment of suitably qualified staff
- Commitment to curricular planning and preparation, as well as regular reporting to parents on pupils' learning progress
- Provision of learning support to pupils with learning needs
- A rich variety of resources available to enhance teaching and learning, both within classrooms and in the school's campus facilities
- Displays throughout the school which highlight and celebrate the pupils' achievements
- The provision of well-resourced and stimulating learning environments for the pupils in each class.

The findings of the assessment were discussed with the participants on the date of the assessment. The participants were advised that the decision regarding registration would be made by Tusla – the Child and Family Agency: Alternative Education Assessment and Registration Service (AEARS).

Following the assessment, a draft report is provided to the principal, along with a Factual Accuracy and Feedback Form, which may be submitted within a specified timeframe, in response to the content of the draft report. The report, along with any information provided on the feedback form for consideration, is brought to the AEARS Registration Panel. The Registration Panel make decisions regarding registration of children in receipt of the education at the Independent School.

Section 10 Discussion of Finding of Report with Principal

The report was discussed with the principal, and it was stated that the recommendation would be to register and retain the pupils of Alexandra College Junior School on the register. The final decision regarding registration is made by Tusla, Child and Family Agency.

Section 11 Outcome

Outcome of Tusla Alternative Education Assessment and Registration Service Panel Regarding Requirements for Section 14 Registration of Children Attending the School

Following the Assessment, the Registration Panel decided that children attending Alexandra College Junior School will be registered and retained on the register of children receiving an education in a place other than a recognised school as required by Section 14 of the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000.

Registration is subject to a periodic review by the Child and Family Agency