

**ALTERNATIVE
EDUCATION
ASSESSMENT &
REGISTRATION**

Section 14 Education (Welfare) Act, 2000

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

**Independent School
Review Assessment Report**

Name of School

The Children's House School

Address

Thornhill,
Lower Kilmacud Road,
Stillorgan,
Co. Dublin.

Telephone

01- 2880417

Name of Principal/Director

Ms Micaela Kuh

Name of Assessor/s

Billy Lawlor

Date of Assessment

25th April 2024

Date of Final Report

28th February 2025

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Section 1 Background Information

1.1. School Hours

Opening Time:	08:45		
Closing time:	15:00		
Main breaks during the day:	12:30	to	13:30
	00:00	to	00:00

Is school in operation for more than five years?

Yes

If no, please give date on which school commenced operation

00/00/0000

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

(Normally interview should take place with the principal)

Ms Micaela Kuh, 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
- 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
- Examination of school social media accounts and Montessori Times newsletter
- Listening to radio feature on RTE
- Information provided on curricular extensions and incentives.

Section 2 General Information and School Context

The Children's House School was established in 1952. The school is registered with the Association Montessori Internationale (AMI) which is recognised by the Association of AMI Teachers of Ireland. Pupils are enrolled from the age of three. Currently there are 79 pupils attending the school. Thirty-five of these pupils are in the six to twelve age range and are being considered for the purposes of registration. The school is a private, fee-charging school that promotes a Catholic ethos. However, pupils of all faiths and none are welcomed in the school. Pupils come from diverse backgrounds and from a wide geographical catchment area.

The school is owned and managed by a board of directors. The board operates as a non-profit limited company. The membership of the board consists of non-parents and parents of former and current pupils of the school. All board members operate in a voluntary capacity. The school principal attends board meetings in a non-voting capacity. She reports to the board on all school matters at these meetings.

Parents play an active role in all school activities. Two parents take responsibility at each class level for supporting the school and for organising school-supporting activities among the parent body. Parents have been surveyed in relation to all school-related matters, and their feedback has been taken on board in the operation and delivery of school services. Pupils are also encouraged to give feedback to staff, and this practice is particularly promoted during one-to-one conferences with pupils in the nine to twelve age range.

Section 3 The Principal and Staff

Staffing in the school consists of eight class teachers including a teaching principal. Ancillary staff consists of a school secretary and a lunchtime supervisor. All class teachers hold an AMI teaching qualification and have received training from the Dyslexia Association of Ireland. Part-time teachers are employed to deliver the extra-curricular programmes in Yoga, Drama, Karate and general sports activities. All teachers have been subject to Garda vetting.

Staff meetings are held once a month. Goal-setting meetings are held twice a year, and targets set are monitored. All staff are encouraged to attend continuous professional development courses. Curricular policies have been developed and were made available for viewing. All policies are adapted to meet the learning content requirements of the *Primary School Curriculum*.

Section 4 Time Devoted to Education

The school day runs from 08:45 each day until 15:00 hours. There is a break on one hour for lunch. The school was in operation for 172 days last year. Holidays comply with the recommended times as laid out in the national guidelines. Pupil attendance at the school is satisfactory.

Section 5 The Learning Environment

The pupils are educated in a purpose-built Montessori school building. Self-directed learning informs much of the work and pupils actively choose some of the learning tasks they are engaged in. Pupils in the two senior classes help to design their own learning programmes guided by their class teacher and informed by an age-appropriate curriculum. Pupils are encouraged to use concrete materials in their learning and to move towards abstraction at their own pace. Self-assessment of learning progress is also promoted. Attractive displays of pupil output are visible in each classroom and in the corridor area. Each classroom also contained an array of teaching manipulatives and educational charts. An outdoor play area and garden are available to the pupils.

Section 6 The Educational Activities

6.1. General information

Teaching and learning are informed by the content of the *Primary School Curriculum*. The educational programme is delivered using Montessori methodologies and an abundance of Montessori educational materials to support learning. Emphasis is placed on individual learning programmes and the extensive practice of active and interactive learning. Extra-curricular classes take place in Yoga, Drama and Karate. A sports teacher is employed to deliver lessons in a range of sporting activities.

6.2. Language and literacy skills

A range of language and literacy skills is developed in the English programme. Appropriate emphasis is placed on the development of oral language skills. Pupils communicate confidently and willingly discuss the content of work that is being completed in the classroom. The importance of developing debating skills is recognised, and formal lessons are given in this area. The reading programme is successfully implemented and supported by the availability of a wide range of reading material. Each classroom contains its own book display area and pupils in the senior class have started their own book club. Pupils are encouraged to read both fiction and non-fiction work. Print and cursive penmanship skills are taught, and workbooks are used to promote appropriate skills in these areas. The New Wave *Onwards and Upwards* approach is used to support work in this area. Pupils receive extensive opportunities to write in a range of styles and for different audiences. Letter writing to famous people and to pen friends is encouraged. Pupils have been involved in international pen friend exchanges with Montessori schools in India and Austria. Pupils have also written stories and plays. The plays are then performed by them for various audiences.

6.3. Numeracy

The range and diversity of mathematical equipment available to the pupils ensure that mathematical concepts are introduced through tactile and sensory experiences. The approach to teaching the subject is child centred and the use of manipulatives such as beads, blocks and cubes features strongly in the exploration of topics in this subject. This approach was demonstrated to me by pupils in the school during my visit. All elements of the mathematics curriculum are covered through the school. Additional work is done by pupils using standard workbooks.

6.4. Irish

Responsibility for the teaching of Irish is undertaken by one member of the teaching staff. Emphasis is placed on the development of oral Irish skills. Targets for each term are set by the teacher, and every effort is made to make the learning meaningful and enjoyable. All lessons are supported by the use of *Abair Liom* and the hands-on resources this scheme provides. Efforts are also made to promote the language during art lessons and games activities.

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

The staff in the school provide a comprehensive and very active learning programme that involves both curricular and extra-curricular activities for its pupils. Pupils explore a range of topics in History and Geography while due attention is also given to all aspects of the curriculum that are studied in Science. The school is actively involved in the *An Taisce Green Schools* programme and has been awarded four green flags for its efforts. All pupils in the school are actively involved in the programme and pupils from the senior end of the school comprise the green school committee. A sports teacher is employed to deliver lessons in Physical Education. Pupils have had the opportunity to learn Karate skills among a range of other games skills and physical activities. A variety of creative experiences are made available for the pupils in Visual Arts, Drama and Music. This ensures that their development in Arts Education is catered for in an active and meaningful manner. Due attention is given to the delivery of the programme in Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE). The *Stay Safe* element of the programme is taught every three years. Relationships and Sexuality Education

(RSE) is also covered with an external facilitator taking responsibility for the delivery of some aspects of this programme. The school is also actively involved in supporting a local daycare centre in its programme for managing cognitive deficits in elderly people. The pupils engage in social interaction with the attendees at the centre and also participate with the attendees in activities using Montessori equipment. This activity takes place once a week.

6.6. Special educational needs

The school caters for pupils with special education needs. All pupils in the Montessori system learn at their own pace and this approach enables special needs pupils to develop educationally and emotionally in a positive way using individualised instruction. Individual educational plans (IEPs) are drawn up for each pupil and inform individual programmes of work. All staff members have received training in dealing with literacy problems from the Dyslexia Association of Ireland. This expertise enhances the educational delivery to special needs pupils.

Section 7 Assessment and Record Keeping

The principal outlined the importance attached by school staff to implementing a positive and beneficial assessment programme in the school. Annual standardised tests in English and Mathematics are administered. Regular classroom testing in all aspects of the curriculum is also a feature of the assessment programme. Careful records are maintained of pupil progress. Assessment results inform individual pupil work programmes. Testing results are shared with individual parents during parent-teacher meetings which are held once a year. Parents receive a school report at the end of the academic year and good communication between the school and home is always practised.

Section 8 Other Relevant Information

The school's application 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 confirmed vetted by National Vetting Bureau
- Child Safeguarding statement as required by Children's First Act 2015
- Fire safety compliance certificate.
- Insurance arrangements.

Section 9 Evaluation of the Education Provision and Recommendations

In my opinion, the education provided to the pupils in The Children's House Primary 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
- The range and variety of curricular provision available to the pupils
- The management of pupils at classroom level
- The positive relationships with all members of the school community
- The commitment of staff to curricular planning and preparation, as well as regular reporting to parents on pupils' learning progress
- The rich variety of resources available to enhance teaching and learning, both within classrooms and on the school grounds
- The displays throughout the school which highlight and celebrate the pupils' achievements
- The provision of well-resourced and stimulating learning environments for the pupils at each class level.

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 Ms Micaela Kuh, principal, and it was stated that the recommendation would be to retain the pupils of The Children's House School on the register. The final decision regarding registration will be made by the Alternative Education Assessment and Registration Service (AEARS), 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 The Children's House 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