

**Section 14 Education (Welfare) Act, 2000**

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

**Independent School  
Preliminary Assessment Report/  
Review Assessment Report**

**Name of School**

Oaklands Academy

**Address**

Kilcronee Lane, Kilcronee, Bray, Co Wicklow

**Telephone**

01 2863290

**Name of Principal/Director**

Cecilia Azcunaga (Executive Director)

**Name of Assessor/s**

Paul Sloan  
Jane Merriman

**Date of Assessment**

10<sup>th</sup> December 2024

**Date of Final Report**

31<sup>st</sup> March 2025

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## Section 1 Background Information

### 1.1. School Hours

Opening Time:	08:45		
Closing time:	17:00		
Main breaks during the day:	11:45	to	12:00
	13:15	to	14:00

Is school in operation for more than five years?

No (previously operational – closed in 2020)

If no, please give date on which school commenced operation

01/09/2024

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

(Normally interview should take place with the principal)

Cecilia Azcunaga (Executive Director), the General Manager and the Head of Academics

### 1.3. Sources of evidence on which report is based

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

- Information furnished in form R2, completed by the school.
- An interview with the Executive Director, General Manager and Head of Academics
- An examination of information available on the school website
- A visit to the working environment of the school
- Discussions with teaching staff and students

## **Section 2    General Information and School Context**

Dublin Oak Academy is an international private boarding school located in County Wicklow, Ireland. The academy offers a supportive and encouraging environment with state-of-the-art facilities, comprehensive programs, and a large staffing team, all aimed at fostering the holistic development of their students. As part of the OAK International network, Dublin Oak Academy follows the Integral Formation method, an educational system rooted in the principles of Regnum Christi and the Legionaries of Christ, focusing on 'intellectual, spiritual, human, and apostolic growth'.

The school primarily serves teenage boys from Mexico who are non-English speakers, providing them with a one-year academic program before they return to continue their education in their home country. During their time at Dublin Oak Academy, students are fully immersed in English to enhance their language proficiency while acquiring practical skills and academic knowledge to support their personal and professional development.

Dublin Oak Academy is a sister school of Woodlands Academy, with both schools sharing some staffing and resources to further enhance their educational offerings. Guided by the values of the Legionaries of Christ and Regnum Christi, the academy currently enrolls 95 students, with plans to expand as ongoing renovations increase its capacity.

## **Section 3    The Principal and Staff**

The staffing structure at Dublin Oak Academy comprises an Executive Director, a General Manager, a Principal/Academic Manager, eleven full-time teachers, and four part-time teachers, shared between the sister campus Woodlands Academy. In addition, there are 3 part-time teachers in Dublin Oak that also assume other responsibilities in the Academy. The academy also employs a full-time nurse. All teaching staff possess appropriate primary and post-primary degrees and certifications in teaching English as a second language. Staff members have completed Garda vetting, and in the main are registered with the Teaching Council of Ireland.

At the time of writing the reported total number of academy staffing comprised 96 members, including ancillary staff and volunteers. A wide range of policies are in place, including an anti-bullying policy, a child protection policy, and a code of behaviour. There is a Child Safeguarding Statement and associated policies and procedures in place. All staff members have undertaken child protection training, and both the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) and Child Safeguarding Officer are fully aware of their duties and responsibilities.

## **Section 4 Time Devoted to Education**

Classes at Dublin Oak Academy commence at 09:15 and conclude at 16:15 daily, with two breaks incorporated into the school day. The academic year spans 154 days, supplemented by supervised trips that account for an additional 31 days of student contact time. Attendance registers are diligently maintained, ensuring consistent monitoring of student participation.

A typical weekday at Dublin Oak Academy starts with wake-up at 06:30, with Mass at 07:30. Breakfast is served at 08:10, after which students prepare for their day. Classes run from 08:45 to 11:45, followed by a break at 11:45. English classes begin at 12:00, and lunch is served at 13:15. The afternoon session resumes from 14:00 to 17:00. Assemblies are held on Mondays. After classes, students have free time until 17:30, when extracurricular activities are scheduled. Dinner takes place at 19:30, followed by night talks. The evening concludes with preparation time, curfew is at 21:10 and lights out at 21:30.

## **Section 5 THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT**

The Academy is located next to Sugarloaf Mountain, in a refurbished 'castle' formerly known as Kilcronee House, now Dublin Oak Academy. The academy has facilities designed to support the students overall academic and sporting development and are currently upgrading some sporting facilities on the campus. Classrooms are equipped with a wealth of resource materials, including modern technology such as iPads, projectors, Apple televisions, and docking stations. Internet usage is strictly monitored, aligning with the school's commitment to a focused and safe learning environment.

Dublin Oak Academy offers state-of-the-art facilities for its students, including:

- Access to a purpose-built multi-sports complex on the nearby sister campus, featuring: a custom-built gymnasium, dance, and aerobics studios with surround sound and purpose-specific areas for various sports.
- Outdoor Sports Facilities: Including three full-size football pitches, three multipurpose courts (for futsal or tennis), and a pitch-and-putt area for golf.
- Health and Wellness Facilities: A fully equipped nurse's station and gym with treadmills, cross trainers, and exercise bicycles.
- Academic Facilities: Modern classrooms with audio-visual equipment, a library, a science lab, and a computer lab.
- Recreational Areas: A games room and expansive green areas for relaxation and outdoor activities.
- Residential Facilities: Comfortable dormitories, high-standard bathrooms and showers, individual lockers for students, and a large dining room with a professional kitchen staff.
- Chapel: Providing a space for prayer and school services.

## **Section 6 The Educational Activities**

### **6.1. General information**

Dublin Oak Academy follows a modified Junior Cycle Curriculum, accommodating cultural differences, language needs, and shortened timeframes. As students attend the academy for just one academic year, the curriculum is carefully condensed and adapted to suit their educational journey. In the past, students participated in state examinations, but this is no longer the case due to the Junior Cycle's reliance on part-formative assessments conducted over two years, which are not feasible within Dublin Oak's one-year timeframe.

Dublin Oak Academy offers a diverse selection of subjects, designed to support students' academic achievement and personal growth:

ESL (English as a Second Language)

English Literature

History

Catholic Formation

Mathematics

Science

Physical Education

Geography

Art

This tailored curriculum ensures students leave the academy with a robust educational foundation and enhanced English language skills to support their future endeavours.

Students attend Dublin Oak Academy to fully immerse themselves in English language learning during their year of residence. All communication within the school is conducted in English, and all subjects are taught through the medium of English. Students are actively encouraged to use English at all times to build their fluency, comprehension, and confidence.

Beyond language acquisition, students are introduced to Irish culture through weekly outings to sites of historical and cultural significance. Special weekends are organised throughout the year within each Irish house, fostering team spirit and strengthening friendships among students. Additionally, to broaden their European experience, students have opportunities to travel to other countries during their time at Dublin Oak Academy.

The academy also boasts a competitive and comprehensive Sports Programme, blending Physical Education classes with specialised Sports Clinics. This allows students to develop their athletic abilities while learning about the importance of healthy living. The programme is carefully designed to help each student discover the sport in which they excel and build a lifelong appreciation for physical activity. The academy provides a comprehensive range of resources across and have plans to expand the above offerings.

## **6.2. Language and literacy skills**

At Dublin Oak Academy, students are encouraged to communicate exclusively in English at all times. The "English Campaign" promotes full language immersion during both school hours and free time, ensuring that students achieve language proficiency.

Sanctions are implemented to address instances of not speaking English, but students are also presented with numerous opportunities to earn rewards for their efforts and accomplishments in English. Students who consistently use English throughout the year without any sanctions are rewarded for their efforts as an additional incentive.

Students are grouped by their English proficiency levels to prepare for Cambridge examinations. The curriculum emphasises grammar, oral language development, writing, and comprehension skills. A range of literary experiences is offered, including the study of short stories, poetry, and excerpts from novels. Students also engage in various forms of writing, such as formal and informal letters, essays, reports, literary reviews, and blogging.

Monthly academic and formation certificates recognise student effort, excellence, and participation. Academic awards include "Student of the Month," "English Excellence," and "English Effort." Formation awards are earned for punctuality, order, etiquette, conduct, personal presentation, and respect. Parents are regularly informed about the awards received, celebrating their progress and achievements.

## **6.3. Numeracy**

The mathematics programme at Dublin Oak Academy follows the Junior Cycle syllabus, typically studied at ordinary level. The curriculum is carefully designed to build students' understanding of mathematics in a structured and systematic way, ensuring they develop a strong foundation in essential concepts, operations, and mathematical relations. Students actively participate in a range of engaging class activities and interactive lessons that enhance their problem-solving skills and enable them to apply mathematical principles in real-world scenarios.

As part of the programme, Dublin Oak Academy hosts an annual Maths Week, an event that fosters enthusiasm for mathematics through hands-on activities, competitions, and engaging challenges. This initiative encourages students to explore mathematics creatively, cultivating a deeper appreciation for the subject.

## 6.4. Irish

The Irish language is not included in the curriculum at Dublin Oak Academy. However, the staff are dedicated to fostering students' interest in Irish culture and heritage. This commitment is demonstrated through educational trips to prominent heritage sites and exposure to Irish history, music, and dance. These activities provide students with a meaningful understanding of Irish traditions and help cultivate a deep appreciation for the culture of the country they are residing in during their academic year.

*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](http://www.education.ie) and/or the State Examinations Commission [www.examinations.ie](http://www.examinations.ie) with regard to the requirement for Irish and/or an additional language.*

## 6.5. Other areas of learning

The academic programme at Dublin Oak Academy provides a wide array of learning experiences across multiple subjects. Students are allocated four periods per week to develop their written and oral French skills in a structured manner. Geography lessons use the *Geography Now* textbook, provided in eBook format, which students access via their iPads. History is studied during four weekly periods, with careful attention given to fostering a comprehensive understanding of historical events and their broader contexts. The art programme encourages creativity through exploration of sculpture, oil painting, and watercolour techniques.

Extracurricular activities include horse riding and golf, adding depth to the students' physical education. The academy's sporting year is divided into three clinic terms, each lasting approximately 11 weeks. Students select two sports per term, with opportunities to change their choices at the start of each new term. Significant resources are devoted to ensuring a robust and enriching sporting experience, reflecting the academy's commitment to continuous improvement in this area.



## **6.6. Special educational needs**

Students attending Dublin Oak Academy are generally of average to above-average ability and do not present with special educational needs at this time. Each student undergoes a thorough admissions process, during which their suitability for the school is assessed. Given the nature of the school, where students are away from their home environments for extended periods, careful consideration is given to ensure that each student is well-prepared for this unique experience. To support their well-being and emotional development, all students have access to psychological support provided by staff members throughout their time at the school.

## **Section 7 Assessment and Record Keeping**

Regular progress tests are conducted at Dublin Oak Academy, with grades systematically recorded to monitor each student's academic development. Beyond these continuous assessments, students' progress is also evaluated through formal school examinations held five times throughout the academic year. Detailed reports are provided to parents, clearly highlighting the grades achieved in each subject.

To measure their English language proficiency, all students undertake a recognised Cambridge examination in June. During the assessors' visit, the Christmas examinations were already in progress.

## **Section 8 Other Relevant Information**

The Executive Director informed the assessors how Dublin Oak Academy is committed to the integral formation of its students, guided by the educational philosophy of the Legionaries of Christ and Regnum Christi. Rooted in a Christian vision of the person, this philosophy emphasises the comprehensive development of students across intellectual, human, spiritual, and apostolic dimensions. To support this mission, students participate in a dedicated double class period each week for Catholic formation, led by the Consecrated members of the order. The Executive Director and a number of staff are consecrated members.

## Section 9 Evaluation of the Education Provision and Recommendations

In my opinion the education provided to the pupils of Dublin Oak Academy, Kilcronee Lane, Kilcronee, Co. Wicklow can be characterised as “a certain minimum education, moral, intellectual and social.”

The successful aspects of the provision include:

- The effective leadership demonstrated by the principal, particularly in terms of instructional guidance.
- The positive and conducive learning environment observed during the visit.
- The suitability of the curriculum in relation to the ages, abilities, and interests of the students.
- The dedication of the staff to delivering an appropriate and engaging curriculum to the pupils.
- The availability and effective use of a range of resources to support lesson delivery.
- The continuous and ongoing improvements being made to the school environment

*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 Executive Director and General Manager at the conclusion of my visit on 10th December 2024. It was confirmed that the recommendation would be to retain the pupils of Dublin Oak Academy, Kilcronee House, Kilcronee, on the register of children receiving an education in a place other than a recognised school. The final decision regarding registration will be made by Tusla - Child and Family Agency: Alternative Education Assessment and Registration Service.

## **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 Dublin Oak Academy 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**