

Section 14 Education (Welfare) Act, 2000

**Assessment Of Education
In Places Other Than Recognised Schools**

**Independent School
Review Assessment Report**



Name of School

Dublin Waldorf School

Address

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Dublin 8,
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Telephone

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Name of Principal/Director

Olivia Relova

Name of Assessor/s

Lisa Duffy

Date of Assessment

15th April 2026

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	5
Section 4	Time Devoted To Education	5
Section 5	The Learning Environment.....	5
Section 6	The Educational Activities	6
6.1.	General information	6
6.2.	Language and literacy skills	6
6.3.	Numeracy	7
6.4.	Irish	7
6.5.	Other areas of learning	7
6.6.	Special educational needs	8
Section 7	The Voice Of The Child	8
Section 8	Assessment And Record Keeping	8
Section 9	Other Relevant Information	9
Section 10	Evaluation Of The Education Provision And Recommendations.....	9
Section 11	Discussion Of Finding Of Report With Principal.....	10
Section 12	Outcome	10

Section 1 Background Information

1.1. School Hours

Opening Time:	08:50		
Closing time:	13:40 (Bridge Class) 14:40 (Class 1 upwards)		
Main breaks during the day:	10:30	to	10:45
	11:15	to	12:15
	12:15	to	12:45

Is school in operation for more than five years?

Yes

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)

Olivia Relova

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 head of the school;
- An interview with the head of the school and deputy head of the school;
- Classroom visits;
- Observation of a sample of learning tasks completed by the pupils;
- Observation of the educational materials in use;
- Review of the school's website www.dublinwaldorf.com;
- Review of Dublin Waldorf School Handbook and Primary Staff Handbook.

Section 2 General Information And School Context

Dublin Waldorf School (DWS) is an independent, fee-paying primary school which delivers the ethos of Waldorf education. It is located in the heart of Dublin's south inner city. It was established in 2017 in response to a growing interest by parents for an alternative model of education to the mainstream education that was available locally. A Waldorf preschool was already well established onsite, and the establishment of a primary school provides an option for children to continue with a Waldorf education throughout the primary years. The school has a multi denominational ethos and families from all faiths, and none, are welcome in the school.

The Board of Trustees govern the school. They aim to act in the best interests of the school and meet approximately once per month to carry out this role. They are responsible for the overall strategy of the school, deal with financial matters and ensure that all relevant legislation is complied with.

The school considers itself to be a community and parental participation is welcomed at DWS. There is a parents' association (PA) and parents support the school by attending festival celebrations and other school events, fund raising, assisting with the upkeep of the garden and generally contributing to school life. The DWS Volunteer Code of Conduct clearly outlines the standard of behaviour expected from volunteers at the school. The head of the primary school meets with the PA once per month. Effective communication between home and school is valued and clear information is provided for parents in the school handbook. A pre-enrolment meeting is arranged for pupils who are enrolling in the school and a school information meeting takes place at the beginning of each academic year. Parent teacher meetings take place twice per academic year and parents also receive an annual school report on their child's progress. Information about school events is shared via Aladdin and email. The school also publishes a termly newsletter with updates for parents.

The school has been part of the local community for many years, and valuable links have been established within this community. A positive relationship exists between the school and Dublin City Council. Pupils frequently use the nearby St Catherine's Park to undertake school activities. Pupils take trips to local places of interest which support and enhance learning.

There are currently 56 pupils age 6 and over enrolled in the school. The capacity of the school is capped at 10 pupils per grade level.

DWS is a member of the Association of Independent Junior schools (AIJS) and the Irish Waldorf Education Association (IWEA). The school is a company limited by guarantee and is registered as a charity. It runs on a not-for-profit basis.

Section 3 The Principal And Staff

Staffing at the school consists of four full-time and three part-time teachers. Interns, who undertake placements in the school, also assist in the delivery of the curriculum. The head of the school manages the day to day running of the school. The college of teachers take responsibility for teaching, learning, and curriculum development. Formal whole school staff meetings, as well as primary only staff meetings are held once per month. A one-to-one meeting also takes place between the head of the school and individual staff members once per month. Staff prepare long term plans in advance of the academic year, and these plans are shared with parents. DWS encourages staff to partake in continuous professional development (CPD), and the support provided by the school to teachers engaging in CPD is outlined in the staff handbook. As indicated on the R2 Annual Update Form, all staff members are Garda vetted.

Section 4 Time Devoted To Education

The school opens its doors to welcome pupils at 08:50 each morning. The school day officially begins at 09:00. Pupils in the Bridge Class finish at 13:40 each day while pupils from Class 1 upwards finish at 14:40. Break time is from 10:30 until 10:45 daily. Garden hour takes place from 11:15 until 12:15, followed by lunch time which is from 12:15 until 12:45. Optional after school supervision is available until 17:00. The calendar for the current academic year was submitted with the R2 Annual Update Form. The school is open for 182 days during the current academic year, commencing on 27th August 2025 and finishing on 25th June 2026. Formal procedures are in place should the school feel a student has not adequately received the education provided due to excessive absences.

Section 5 The Learning Environment

DWS is located in Dublin's south inner city in a Georgian building which in the past housed Dublin's oldest creche, the Liberty Creche. It was formerly two houses, with a carriageway between them, but has been reconfigured to create one large building. The building was bequeathed by the Quakers to the school in 2018. The possibility of acquiring an adjacent empty building is being explored by the school. The outdoor space has been creatively upgraded to transform a large, concreted area into an attractive outdoor space. The concrete is covered in wood chippings, and a small vegetable garden has been created at the back of the outdoor space. The addition of beautiful cherry blossom trees, which were in full bloom, add to the aesthetics of the area. The addition of wall murals, painted by members of the parent body, also help create a child friendly outdoor learning environment.

Classrooms are attractively presented. Classroom walls are painted using the Lazure technique, and natural materials are used throughout to help create a calm and nurturing learning environment. Younger pupils are taught in the Bridge Class. In this classroom, pupils sit on cushions on the floor and work at low tables. Other groupings consist of multi-grade classes with pupils from Class 1 and Class 2 taught in one classroom, Class 3 and Class 4 in another and Class 5 and Class 6 are taught together in another room. Technology is not used in the classrooms.

Section 6 The Educational Activities

6.1. General information

The school follows the Steiner curriculum, as well as aspects of the Primary School Curriculum (PSC). It aims to cater for the needs of the whole child and seeks to nurture the head, heart and hands of every child. The five school values of reverence to beauty, reverence to truth, reverence to goodness, reverence to nature, and reverence to each other guide the implementation of the daily activities. Using the outdoors and nature-based play are an integral part of the education provision and pupils receive at least an hour of outdoor activity every day. Creativity and inquiry are encouraged, and it is hoped that children develop a genuine love of learning.

The developmental stage of the pupils is considered when planning learning activities. In the Bridge Class, the overarching themes of celebrations, festivals, and rhythms of time are explored. Children begin their formal academic learning at approximately age 7 when they are in Class 1. Here, the core of the curriculum consists of the main lesson, which is usually taught in three-to-four-week blocks. These lessons include learning areas such as literacy, numeracy, zoology and botany. The school day follows a rhythm and usually begins with a morning verse or rhyme. Kinaesthetic movement and games may also be included in this activity. The main lesson is focused on a specific topic of learning. After break, skills practice usually takes place followed by one hour of garden time. Lunch time follows and then there are more lessons which usually consist of a skills practice lesson and handwork or artwork. Whenever possible trips to local places of interest are taken to support and consolidate learning.

Festivals are celebrated and occupy a central place in the children's school life. The Harvest Festival, Lantern Festival, Winter Solstice Spiral Festival, May Day Festival and End of Year Festival are celebrated annually through story, fables, poetry, song and craftwork. Parents are involved in these festival celebrations which help create a bridge between home and school life.

6.2. Language and literacy skills

The programme for language and literacy encompasses a wide range of activities to develop oral language, reading and writing skills. Circle time and storytelling provide a foundation for language development in the Bridge Class and pupils continue to be exposed to a considerable amount of poetry and storytelling as they progress through the school. Pupils also develop their oral language skills through participation in festivals, dramas and the AIJS verse speaking competition. The formal teaching of reading and writing begins when pupils are deemed ready in Class 1 at age 7.

Letters are introduced through storytelling and exposure to fantasy and fairy tales, and letter formation is introduced via movement, narrative and drawing. Pupils progress onto reading and writing simple words and simple sentences. As pupils progress through the school the development of literacy skills is integrated into the main lesson and each child is guided to create a main lesson book. Grammar lessons are included in the provision. Ongoing practice in reading and writing skills happens during skills practice lessons. Pupils partake in the AIJS spelling Bee competition.

6.3. Numeracy

The development of numeracy skills is integrated into the main lesson, and concepts are introduced when children are developmentally ready. Concrete materials are used as much as possible so that concepts are introduced in a way that makes sense to the child. Rhythmic games, songs, stories and guided movement are also used to help children understand number and other mathematical concepts. Pupils were viewed working on maths worksheets and copying maths work into their main lesson book during the assessment.

6.4. Irish

Irish is taught by a specialist teacher to all pupils three days per week. The school has created its own curriculum based on the PSC, which focuses on topics which are valued in Steiner education, such as the calendar, seasons and festivals. An outline of this curriculum was submitted to the assessor on the day of the assessment. Irish is mainly taught through songs, poetry and stories in the early years. Lessons become more formal as pupils progress through the school. The study of Irish grammar is included in the provision.

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

An integrated approach to learning is adopted in DWS. The celebration of seasonal festivals lies at the heart of many learning experiences. These festivals primarily focus on the rhythm of nature and the changing of the seasons. Many of the festivals are rooted in Christian and Pagan traditions and are celebrated through story, fables, poetry, songs, art and crafts.

A creative response from students is embedded in their learning experiences and practical and artistic activities such as drawing, painting and the artistic presentation of work play an integral part in the main lesson. Time is also allocated to the development of artistic skills during afternoon lessons. Pupils undertake weaving, modelling, knitting, crochet, embroidery and some basic woodwork during their time in DWS. Singing and musical expression are also an integral part of the provision. Pupils

learn music theory and literacy and how to play an instrument. In Class 1 and 2 pupils learn the recorder, while in Class 3 the violin is introduced.

By the end of primary school, pupils will have experienced myths, legends and stories from a diverse range of cultures and eras including India, Egypt and Persia. Pupils study geology, botany, zoology and astronomy. Pupils are exposed to science through experiences in the local natural environment and through stories, which had them learn about the world around them. Physics is studied in the senior classroom.

All pupils have the opportunity to learn Spanish, which is taught by a native speaker. Initially the language is introduced in the early years through song, poetry and story. As the pupils progress through the school, lessons become more formal and basic reading and writing in Spanish is introduced.

At DWS there is an emphasis on outdoor play, regardless of the weather. Pupils receive one hour free play every day during garden time. They also partake in physical activities in a nearby park.

6.6. Special educational needs

At the enrolment stage, the school endeavours to assess if they can meet the individual needs of the child. The head of the school is transparent about the resources which are available in the school for meeting the individual needs of pupils with additional needs. However, as pupils are taught in a multi-class situation, teachers can cater for varying needs and abilities through differentiation of work and adaptation of the curriculum. Student support plans are drawn up when deemed necessary, and parents are involved at the earliest stage when the school has concerns about a child's progress.

Section 7 The Voice Of The Child

Pupils discussed their learning in the classrooms visited on the day of the assessment. Pupils were eager to show and discuss their artwork in the Bridge Class and were excited about starting an art lesson when the assessor visited. Other classes discussed their numeracy work and their Easter holidays. Pupils presented as independent workers who were engaged in their learning.

Section 8 Assessment And Record Keeping

Pupils are continually assessed informally through teacher observation. Pupils' main lesson books are maintained as records of learning, and examples of these were viewed during classroom visits. Basic classroom tests are introduced in Class 5 and Class 6 to prepare pupils for secondary school. Two scheduled parent-teacher meetings take place each year. Additional meetings can be arranged by appointment if so required.

Section 9 Other Relevant Information

As declared on the R2 Annual Update Information Form, all staff members have been Garda vetted and have been trained in the implementation of the school's Child Safeguarding Statement and all staff have been trained in Children First Guidelines. There is an appointed Designated Liaison Person (DLP), and Deputy Designated Liaison Person (DDL), and details are included in the Child Safeguarding Statement, which is prominently displayed. The Child Safeguarding Statement has been confirmed compliant by the Tusla Child Safeguarding Statement Compliance Unit. Child safeguarding procedures were submitted on the day of the assessment. The Health and Safety Policy and Fire Safety Policy were submitted with the R2 Annual Update Form.

The principal stated that five staff members have up to date first aid training.

Section 10 Evaluation Of The Education Provision And Recommendations

In my opinion, pupils attending Dublin Waldorf School are in receipt of an education, intellectual, physical, moral, and social that meets requirements for Section 14 registration for pupils attending the school.

The reasons I have formed this opinion of the education provision in the school are as follows:

- The support received from the parent body;
- The arts are cultivated and creativity is nurtured and encouraged in the school;
- The inclusion of one hour of outdoor free play every day;
- The use of facilities in the locality to enhance the education provision;
- The emphasis on learning through seasonal festivals to provide children with a holistic education;
- The submission of yearly plans of work for each class during the assessment;
- The commitment of the staff to the principles of Waldorf education;
- The information supplied by the head of the school and deputy head of the school, as well as the information contained on the school website and in the school handbook supplied a very comprehensive account of the school.

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 preliminary 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. After consideration is given to information provided on the feedback form, the final report is brought to the AEARS Registration Panel for a decision regarding registration of children in receipt of the education at the Independent School.

Section 11 Discussion Of Finding Of Report With Principal

The finding of the report was discussed with the head of the school, Ms Olivia Relova, at the conclusion of the visit on the 15th of April 2026. We discussed the procedures that would follow. It was stated that the recommendation would be to register and retain the pupils of Dublin Waldorf School on the register. The final decision regarding registration will be made by Tusla, Child and Family Agency.

Section 12 Outcome

Outcome Of Tusla Alternative Education Assessment And Registration Service Panel Regarding Requirements For Section 14 Registration Of Children Attending The School

The assessment report was brought to Tusla Registration Panel for a decision regarding registration. The Registration Panel decided that children attending Dublin Waldorf 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