

Section 14 Education (Welfare) Act, 2000

Assessment of Education in places other than Recognised Schools

Independent School Review Assessment Report



Name of School

International School of Dublin

Address

Synge Street, Dublin 8, DO8 PW64.

Name of Principal/Director

Acting Principals: Naná Isa and Louise Kearns

Name of Assessor/s

Lisa Duffy
Jane Merriman

Date of Assessment

2nd May 2024

Date of Final Report

20th June 2024

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Section 1 Background Information

1.1. School Hours

Opening Time:	08:45		
Closing time:	14:45		
Main breaks during the day:	10:15	To	10:35
	13:00	To	13:30

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)

Acting Principals: Naná Isa and Louise Kearns

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 acting principal
- An interview with the acting principals
- Classroom visits
- Observation of a sample of learning tasks completed by the pupils
- Observation of the educational materials in use
- International School of Dublin yearbook
- www.internationalschooldublin.ie

Section 2 General Information and School Context

International School Dublin (ISD) was established in 2007, as a culturally diverse school, that caters for pupils from both the local and international community. It is a small, private, non-denominational school, situated in the heart of Dublin city centre. At present, the school shares a campus with the state-run Sancta Maria Primary School. The two schools share outdoor sport and play facilities, timetabling breaks and outdoor activities so that both schools have separate access to the secure outdoor recreation area. The school caters for pupils from junior infants to sixth class. For the purposes of registration, 32 pupils aged 6 and over are enrolled in the school. The school operates a low pupil teacher ratio and class sizes are capped at 18 for kindergarten classes and 20 for grade 1-6. Enrolment levels are described as stable. The school is governed by an independent, voluntary Board of Directors, who meet for a minimum of four meetings per year.

ISD is the first accredited International Baccalaureate (IB) World Primary School in Ireland. All teaching and learning are guided by the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme (IB PYP). Inquiry based learning, which emphasises the student's role in the learning process, is integrated across all subject areas. Students are encouraged to take responsibility and ownership of their learning, with the aim of developing an innate love of learning.

A collaborative approach between home and school is encouraged, enriching the educational experience for all. Close links with parents have been established and parental involvement is welcomed. Parents often assist at school events or act as chaperones on field trips. They may be invited into the school as guest speakers or volunteer as class representatives. Open communication between home and school is promoted, with the school app used as the main method of communication. All teachers, in collaboration with students, provide weekly updates of student learning. Parents are welcome to visit the school on Friday mornings and have the opportunity to chat informally with the teachers. Every six weeks, parents are invited to attend the end of unit sharing, where each class presents their recent learning in a creative and interactive manner. The school prides itself on the sense of community which is cultivated within the school.

Section 3 The Principal and Staff

Staffing at the school consists of the principal and four full time class teachers. The principal is supported by the curriculum co-ordinator and the office administrator. Both are currently jointly undertaking the role of acting principal. Four additional staff members work with pupils - a physical education teacher, Spanish teacher, performing arts teacher, and English as an additional language (EAL) /after school teacher, all of whom are employed in a part time capacity.

Staff meetings are held at least once per week, and also at the beginning and end of the academic year. Staff plan and make decisions collaboratively, share resources, ideas and professional knowledge and a culture of openness and collegiality is cultivated within the school. Professional working relationships, based on mutual respect and trust, exist between co-workers. Ongoing professional development is supported and encouraged at ISD. Relevant courses are undertaken by the staff, ensuring that they are kept up to date on current best practices in education.

Section 4 Time Devoted to Education

The school operates for 172 days per academic year. The new school year commences in late August and finishes in late June, with two mid-term breaks in October and February, a three-week winter break in December/January and a two-week spring break in March/April.

The school opens its doors daily at 08:00 to facilitate students attending a morning supervision programme until 08:30. Classes begin at 08:45 and finish at 14:45. The school day is structured into seven periods with a mid-morning snack break of 20 minutes and a middle of the day lunch break of 30 minutes. An optional after school programme operates from 14:45-18:00. Attendance levels are described as good, and a record is kept of all pupil attendance.

Section 5 The Learning Environment

The school is located on the top floor of the building housing the Sancta Maria Primary School. The learning environment is spacious, clean, bright and welcoming. There are four primary school classrooms, as well as an EAL room, staff room, Spanish/PA room and a large open area which houses the library. This area is equipped with comfortable seating.

Classrooms are bright, airy and well equipped with educational materials. Each classroom is also equipped with an interactive white board and a teaching computer. The school library, as well as individual classroom libraries, are well stocked. Pupils have access to laptops and tablets. Hallways are spacious and well maintained. Large notice boards, displaying examples of the pupils' activities, were viewed in both the classrooms and the hallway. A large, multipurpose hall, complete with a stage area, is available for school use.

Outdoors, the play area is safe and secure. A large astro turf area, as well as a covered area, ensures that the students can play outside daily, whatever the weather.

Section 6 The Educational Activities

6.1. General information

The IB PYP focuses on the holistic education of students up to 12 years of age. Pupils learn how to learn through the IB Units of Inquiry, which are 6-week, in-depth explorations of a concept. Students explore a central idea, across a broad range of subjects, drawing on content from cultures across the globe. The PYP themes, taught across the academic year, are as follows:

- who we are
- where we are in place and time
- how we express ourselves
- how the world works
- how we organise ourselves
- sharing the planet

Different perspectives are explored, with pupils using critical and creative thinking to look at things from different perspectives. Pupils make connections to their prior knowledge, explore the material, ask questions and share ideas. The curriculum coordinator oversees the transdisciplinary themes, ensuring that key concepts and skills are covered in a balanced manner each academic year.

Students of ISD are encouraged to take responsibility and ownership of their own learning. They are also encouraged to set goals, self-assess, and reflect on their learning. As stated on the school website, *“the curriculum is learner driven, facilitated through inquiry and focused on intercultural understanding, lifelong learning and respect”*. Pupils learn in multi grade classrooms. The language of instruction is English. However, all classes are multilingual, and students’ mother tongues are highly valued. Textbooks are not used in the school. Class teachers follow a timetable, which were submitted with the R2 form.

Whole school assemblies take place which are based around the unit of inquiry, with each classroom taking turns at hosting the assembly.

Homework is assigned with due consideration to the child’s ability and needs. Engagement in homework enables students to further explore concepts learnt at school and make connections between home and school. A weekly homework plan is given to senior pupils, allowing them the autonomy to decide how and when to complete the assigned homework.

6.2. Language and literacy skills

Language development is seen to be the shared responsibility of teachers, students and parents. PYP students learn to communicate in a variety of ways and in more than one language. (Spanish is also taught in the school.) Language learning permeates the entire school curriculum and oral language skills are constantly being developed through the learning of topic specific vocabulary and through participation in presentations, concerts, assemblies and end of unit sharing. Additional language support is provided to EAL students both in class and through sessions with a specialised language teacher.

Reading and writing skills are developed through the unit of inquiry. Pupils read levelled readers, classroom chapter books and novels, and library books related to their current unit of inquiry. Valuable links have been established with the local library and the provision is enhanced through participation in World Book Day events, book fairs and *Fighting Words* workshops.

Pupils are exposed to a variety of writing genres, with examples of various writing genres viewed during the assessment. Spelling and handwriting skills are developed through the units of inquiry. Pupils are encouraged to keep samples of work which they are proud of in their own personal digital portfolio.

6.3. Numeracy

The curriculum co-ordinator works collaboratively with the staff to map out numeracy skills and to blend them seamlessly into the unit of inquiry. Pupils work in a numeracy rich environment, with maths posters on display in classrooms, and maths resources readily available for pupil use. Basic mathematical skills are practised daily, maths language is developed, and a significant emphasis is placed on exploring different mathematical strategies and discussing the various processes which can be used to tackle a problem.

6.4. Irish

Pupils do not study the Irish language at ISD. However, tutoring in Irish is available in the after-school programme, should pupils wish to avail of it.

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

Spanish:

At ISD it is believed that learning more than one language gives students the opportunity to broaden their horizons, and multilingualism is considered a key advantage in a global world. Spanish tuition is offered to all students twice per week and is taught by a native Spanish teacher. Initially the focus is on learning oral language skills using games. By the end of sixth class most pupils can read and write basic Spanish and engage in basic conversations.

Performing Arts:

Performing arts includes music, drama and dance, and is taught by a specialist performing arts teacher. The school is fortunate to have a well-equipped, dedicated music room. Pupils partake in singing, learn how to play various musical instruments, read music, and take part in two variety concerts every year. Individual private music lessons are also available in the after-school service.

Host Country Studies:

During host country studies, awareness is raised about the local, host country culture. When learning about Irish festivals and other aspects of Irish life and culture, pupils are encouraged to make connections with their own culture and that of their classmates.

Personal, Social and Physical Education (PSPE):

As well as developing students academically, ISD focuses on a holistic approach to education, and also develops pupils social and emotional well-being. The learning area of PSPE includes PE and personal, social, and health education. For PE, a part time teacher is employed in the school. Students engage in classes three times per week and wherever possible sessions are linked to the pupils' current unit of inquiry. Activities that build teamwork, develop skills and increase fitness levels are included in the weekly provision. This includes aerobics, tennis, adventure/ strategy games and swimming. Two sports days take place each year giving students, teachers, and parents the opportunity to take part in both collaborative and individual physical activities in a relaxed and enjoyable environment.

A student council exists in the school and representatives from each class have the opportunity to sit on the student council. Every week, the class representatives meet with a teacher and together they discuss ideas for improving school life. Classroom agreements and acceptable behaviour are on display throughout the school. The changes which puberty brings are taught in fifth and sixth class. Mindfulness activities, brain breaks, or yoga stretches are also included during the day. As stated on the school website, *"Well-being is linked to all aspects of a student's experience at school and beyond"*. It is paramount for our students to feel empowered by their learning to value and take responsibility for their learning and to demonstrate resilience. Such learners are able to reflect on

themselves, their experiences and the process of learning in order to demonstrate commitment to personal growth.”

Social Studies:

Social studies learning aims to guide students towards a deeper understanding of themselves and others, and of their place in an increasingly global society. Geography and history are included in this learning area and are taught through the units of inquiry, with field trips and guest speakers enhancing the learning experience for pupils.

Science:

Science is taught using an interdisciplinary approach. Children are encouraged to be curious about the world around them and to understand how the topics they cover in science link to other learning areas. Throughout their time in primary school, the scientific skills of observation, prediction, experimentation and recording are developed.

Information Technology (IT):

IT learning is integrated across all learning areas. Smartboards, laptops and tablets are available for pupil use. From an early age, pupils learn how to take care of these devices, then progress on to learning word processing skills, using Google Classroom and engaging in basic coding and video editing. Virtual lessons also take place to ensure that students are prepared should a return to remote learning ever occur.

Art:

Pupils are exposed to a broad range of experiences and work with a wide range of materials in ISD. They are given opportunities to both create and respond during art classes. Whenever possible learning in this area is linked to the unit of inquiry and examples of pupils’ artwork is on display throughout the school.

6.6. Special educational needs

Each child’s needs are considered on a case-by-case basis to determine whether the school can cater for the child and meet their individual needs. Parents are asked to supply all relevant documentation and share any information about their child’s special educational needs. If a child requires the support of a special needs assistant (SNA), this is funded by the parents of the child.

The curriculum at ISD is inclusive and every student enrolled in the school is educated to reach their full potential. Inclusive practices are embraced within the school, and additional support is available for those identified as having individual needs.

EAL classes provide support for non-native speakers of English, with the aim of helping students to function independently within the school. Individual education plans are drawn up in conjunction with parents and are reviewed regularly.

Section 7 Assessment and Record Keeping

Each student maintains a portfolio of work samples which documents their own personal learning, progress, accomplishments, and challenges. Parents are invited to view the portfolios with their child and partner in the evaluation process. Pupils frequently engage in peer checking activities, using rubrics and checklists as a guide. Criteria for assessment is always established with the students in advance of assessment.

Pupils are encouraged to reflect on their learning. At the end of each unit of inquiry the school community comes together to celebrate student learning at the end of unit sharing event. During this event, each class makes a presentation based on the learning that took place throughout their inquiry. At the end of Grade 6 an exhibition is held, based on each student's personal in-depth inquiry. A mentor is assigned to each pupil, who supports them in their learning. The pupils work on a topic of their own choosing and their findings are shared on exhibition night.

Parent-teacher conferences take place twice per year, once at the beginning of the year and once in February. Student led conferences also take place at the end of each academic year, providing students with the opportunity to reflect on their learning and set goals for the forthcoming academic year. Written reports are issued three times per year.

Standardised tests in maths are administered at the beginning and end of the school year.

Section 8 Other Relevant Information

ISD prides itself on its strong sense of community. An information pack on Dublin is issued to all new families. At the beginning of each academic year, there is a welcome back to school event. An annual yearbook, compiled by students, is published, celebrating the year's events and achievements. All staff members have been Garda vetted and have been trained in the implementation of Children First. All staff have completed the child safeguarding training. There is an appointed Designated Liaison Person (DLP) and Deputy Designated Liaison Person (DDL), with notices displayed as required.

Section 9 Evaluation of the Education Provision and Recommendations

Pupils attending ISD are in receipt of an education, intellectual, physical, moral, and social that meets requirements for Section 14 Registration for pupils attending the school.

Aspects of the provision that are successful include:

- The information provided by the acting principals during the interview supplied a very comprehensive account of the school, its unique context and the curriculum.
- The emphasis on building a sense of community and the establishment of effective links within the community.

- The close collaborative practices between staff members.
- The learning environment, which consists of well-equipped classrooms and a secure outdoor play area.
- The implementation of the IBPYP curriculum.
- The special attention paid to addressing issues which new students and their families may experience as they transition to a new culture, including the provision of targeted EAL lessons to pupils and the open-door policy which the school adopts.
- The positive partnership which is established between parents, teachers and students.
- The strong communication between home and 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 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 acting principals at the conclusion of the visit on the 2nd May 2024. It was stated that the recommendation would be to register the pupils of International School of Dublin on the register. The final decision regarding registration will be made by the Alternative Education Assessment and Registration Service 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 International School of Dublin 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