

Section 14 Education (Welfare) Act, 2000

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

**Independent School
 Comprehensive Review Assessment
 Report**

Name of School

Liberty Christian School

Address

Mungret College, Mungret, Co. Limerick, V94OY56

Name of Principal/Director

Mary Kavanagh

Name of Assessor/s

Lisa Duffy
 Jane Merriman

Date of Assessment

26th February 2025

Date of Final Report

28th July 2025

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.....	6
Section 6	The Learning Encounter	7
Section 7	The Voice of the Child	7
Section 8	The Educational Activities	7
6.1.	General information	7
6.2.	Language and literacy skills	8
6.3.	Numeracy	9
6.4.	Irish	9
6.5.	Other areas of learning	9
6.6.	Special educational needs	10
Section 9	Assessment and Record Keeping	11
Section 10	Other Relevant Information	11
Section 11	Evaluation of the Education Provision and Recommendations	11
Section 12	Discussion of Finding of Report with Principal	13
Section 13	Outcome	13

Section 1 Background Information

1.1. School Hours

Opening Time:	08:15		
Closing time:	15:30		
Main breaks during the day:	10:30	to	11:00
	12:30	to	13:15

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)

Ms Mary Kavanagh and another staff member

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 principal;
- An interview with the principal and supervisor;
- Classroom visit and interactions with the students;
- Observation of a sample of learning tasks completed by the students;
- Observation of the educational materials in use;
- Review of the school's website www.lcsmungret.com.

Section 2 General Information and School Context

Liberty Christian School is an independent, educational day school for primary and post-primary students. It is based in the buildings of the former Mungret College near the village of Mungret in County Limerick. The school was founded in 2004. Liberty Christian School operates within the structure of the Limerick Christian Centre. Limerick Christian Church own the property and subsidise the school's funding. Parents pay annual fees for their children and understand that the ethos of the school is based on Christian principles. However, children of all denominations are welcome to attend the school.

Mary Kavanagh, who previously worked as an administrator and International Certificate of Christian Education (ICCE) coordinator, has recently been invited to take up the role of principal. She took over from the previous vice and deputising principal who was in these roles for a number of years. A new supervisor was also appointed at the beginning of the current academic year.

The board of Limerick Christian Centre oversee the management of the school. There are currently five members on the board. The principal communicates informally with the chairperson in relation to matters pertaining to the school. This board have regular formal meetings. Currently there is no arrangement in place for the principal to attend these meetings or to report formally to the board.

Children's learning in the school is provided mainly through the international Accelerated Christian Education (ACE) curriculum, although aspects of the Alpha to Omega curriculum can also be undertaken. The school has a low pupil teacher ratio, with all students taught in the same classroom. The characteristics of Jesus Christ are taught, and these qualities of character are highlighted and reinforced throughout the school day. The aim of the school, as stated on the school website, www.lcsmungret.com is to *"partner with parents to prepare and develop the whole student-mind, body and spirit- through academic training that is interwoven with biblical teaching, ministry and worship"*.

Supervisors are in regular contact with the parent body. Communication is mainly via a dedicated WhatsApp group or through the informal daily interactions with parents. Parents are welcome to schedule an appointment with the supervisor to discuss any concerns which they have about their child.

For the purposes of registration there are currently six students enrolled in the school. The principal acknowledged that the school must expand in order to survive and would like to boost numbers for the coming academic year. Initial steps have been taken to involve the wider school community in promoting the school and the value of Christian education. The capacity of the school is forty students and there is adequate space to accommodate a separate pre-school, primary school and secondary school, should the need arise.

Section 3 The Principal and Staff

Staffing at the school consists of the principal, Ms Mary Kavanagh and one other supervisor who is a past pupil of Liberty Christian School. Both have undertaken appropriate training in the implementation of the ACE curriculum with Christian Education Europe. Staff also re-train in this area every four years to ensure that standards are maintained. Mary Kavanagh is the coordinator of the ICCE, which second-level students aim to achieve. A part time teacher of physical education is also employed in the school. A parent volunteer is currently assisting with an art project once per week and there are plans to further utilise the expertise and talents available in the wider school community to enhance the provision. A number of volunteers are available to act as substitute supervisors on an ad hoc basis. It is recommended that a Staff Absence Policy is developed, to provide clarity on who can provide staffing cover as required, in order to meet the needs of the students.

Ongoing informal communication takes place daily between the two full time staff members regarding day-to-day matters. It is recommended that formal, minuted whole staff meetings are held at regular intervals throughout the academic year.

Section 4 Time Devoted to Education

The school follows a calendar, which was submitted with the R2 Annual Update Information Form. It is operational for 175 days during the current academic year. The official opening time is 08:15, with lessons starting at 08:40. Two staff members are present on the premises from the time students arrive in the school in the morning, until they depart in the evening.

The day commences with opening exercises. During this time, children recite a pledge to the Christian flag and to the Bible, there are prayers for special intentions, and they listen to a Christian message. Students are required to score their homework prior to formal lessons commencing. They also set their goals for the day at this time.

Packets of Accelerated Christian Education (PACE) work commences at 08:40 from Tuesday to Friday, while a whole school assembly takes place on Monday mornings. Assembly usually takes place in the church and consists of song singing, discussions around Christian messages or themes, announcements and congratulations.

School officially ends at 14:45 for students working at primary school level and at 15:30 for older students who are studying for the ICCE. School finishes at 14:00 on Friday. Morning break is from 10:30-11:00 while lunch break is from 12:30- 13:15 each day. Students receive regular mini stretch breaks throughout the day. Students' attendance is generally very good.

Section 5 The Learning Environment

Staff in Liberty Christian School aim to create a safe and secure learning environment in which students can thrive. Staff endeavour to create a positive learning environment and the assessors observed a calm and organised learning environment, with established routines, smooth transitions and inclusive practices during the assessment.

Limerick Christian Church has ownership of the extensive Christian centre. However, only a small self-contained part of the building is occupied by the school. Formal academic learning takes place in a spacious classroom. A separate large, multipurpose room is used at lunch time. There is also a large room available upstairs for use during adverse weather conditions. Here, students have access to prerequisites for volleyball, basketball and ping-pong. An outside, enclosed area is used for games at breaktime.

A shared office is available for administrative duties to be carried out. A shared staff room is also available for use by school staff.

The school looks out on an extensive area of parkland which Limerick County Council has developed into an impressive public park and recreation area. It includes a walking and running track, a large playground, and exercise and fitness equipment. All of these facilities are available to the school's students.

Every pupil has their own personal workstation or office. Here, students have complete privacy to set personal academic goals and to work independently.

The school has a supply of books for the student's course work. Students have supervised access to personal computers to support their studies. A room storing educational games and resources is located beside the main classroom. A large map of the world is painted on to the classroom wall and posters with religious messages are on display throughout the school and the Christian centre. The creation of a classroom mural, designed and painted by the students, will greatly enhance the learning environment upon completion. The recent addition of notice boards also enhances the learning environment.

Section 6 The Learning Encounter

During the assessment the assessors observed teaching and learning activities. Students were observed engaging in their PACE work. During this time students, for the most part worked quietly and independently, raising their flag when they required one-on-one additional support. Students were observed scoring their classwork, using the score cards which were easily accessible in the classroom. A physical education class was also observed during the assessment.

Positive relationships between staff and students were evident during learning encounters. During the observed learning encounters throughout the day, it was evident that the group are comfortable working together in the learning environment.

From discussions with the principal and supervisor in relation to the learning encounter, it is clear that they actively reflect on their educational practice to gain insights, and to review and adapt practices in order to improve future interactions with the students in the school.

Section 7 The Voice of the Child

During the assessment, the assessors interacted with the students and discussed their education experience with them. They clearly articulated what the education provision looks like for them and demonstrated a clear understanding of how they progress through the PACE work. Students at Liberty Christian School are encouraged to have a relationship with their learning and to challenge themselves to work at their level and progress at their own pace. Several students spoke about the educational goals which they were striving to attain, and how they planned to achieve them. Students spoke positively about their learning and their experiences in school. Through observation of classes and breaktimes during the day, it is clear that students feel comfortable in the learning environment and engage well with the educational activities, within their own capacity.

Section 8 The Educational Activities

6.1. General information

The ACE curriculum is based on Biblical principles and focuses on the spiritual and moral development of the child, as well as their academic advancement. It is a highly structured and individualised curriculum, with lessons for each day set out in the various subjects. The children score their homework in the morning prior to learning time commencing. They also set their educational

goals for the day. These goals are checked and supervisors complete goal card recording. Under this system students should learn to become self-directed learners who take responsibility for their own learning. The flexible nature of the provision allows students to progress at their own rate. The class supervisor is available to give individualised help to a student as required. Students raise a 'flag' to request help.

The core subjects of English, maths, science, social studies (history and geography), literature and word-building are taught through PACE work in accordance with ACE procedures. A level comprises of twelve PACES. These packets include instructions, check-in sections to reinforce key concepts, quizzes, and small tests. Completion of a PACE usually takes between one and two weeks. Students work in blocks of between 35 and 45 minutes and then have a stretch break.

Children usually work individually at their own private workstation or office. However, support or direct instruction may be given in a small group if necessary.

Staff are hoping to access in service training, through ACE, to aid with the planning and implementation of project work. These projects will align with areas of particular interest to the students enrolled in the school.

6.2. Language and literacy skills

As part of the ACE curriculum, language and literacy skills are developed through PACE work and are integrated into all other areas of learning. Students are required to study prescribed texts in literature and all students are exposed to poetry. Various different levels of PACE work are in use in the classroom, as students work at their own individual level.

Students are exposed to a variety of writing genres through their PACE work and writing and grammatical skills are developed as they progress through the levels. Essay writing is an integral part of the ACE curriculum. Spelling is taught through the core subject of word building and is practiced and reinforced throughout each unit of work. Oral language is also developed through this subject, as the student's vocabulary base is expanded through the study of parts of speech. Throughout the curriculum, the introduction of new vocabulary is controlled so that no new word is used without the student first learning its meaning and pronunciation. These words are then repeated in context to ensure mastery. It is planned to include more oral reports in the provision in the future.

Based on the assessors' observations on the day of the assessment, the provision in language and literacy is suited to the age, ability and aptitude of the students. Regular opportunities are given for the students to develop appropriate reading, writing and oral language skills. Reflective practices among staff members, as well as the availability of individual support for students, ensures that the provision addresses the needs of the students.

6.3. Numeracy

The numeracy programme is structured and highly individualised, with all students working at their own level and pace. The ACE curriculum encompasses all key areas of numeracy, presented in a sequential and structured manner. Key mathematical skills are developed through daily activities and practice. Students must master one concept before moving on to the next. Regular assessments help identify areas of strength and areas which require revision and consolidation. Individual targeted support is given if required, ensuring that the provision is meeting the individual needs of the students. Several students articulated that they were working hard to complete their numeracy PACEs at their current level and expressed a desire to progress on to the next level.

Based on the assessors' observations on the day of the assessment, students are in receipt of a certain minimum education in the area of numeracy.

6.4. Irish

Students have the opportunity to learn Irish if they so wish using www.rosettastone.com.

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

Art: The re-introduction of the learning area of art was evident during the assessment. Students are working with a local artist to plan and create a mural within the classroom. As a group, students discussed how they worked collaboratively to decide on a theme, and to plan the roles which would be

undertaken by each person involved in the project. The assessors viewed a plan of the finished mural during the assessment and also viewed an outline of the mural on the classroom wall. The study of art theory is incorporated into this project.

Physical Education (PE): PE is timetabled for all students once per week and is taught by an external coach. During the assessment, the assessors met the PE coach and observed part of a PE lesson which took place in the large room upstairs. The facilities of the nearby public park and recreation area were also used for part of the lesson. The lesson focused on the development of basketball skills. A PE plan with stated goals was submitted during the assessment.

Languages: Students at post primary level attending Liberty Christian School have the option of using www.rosettastone.com to learn a foreign language.

Science: Science is one of the ACE curriculum's core subjects. Aspects of biology, physics, chemistry and animal science are studied throughout a student's time at school. It is non evolutionary in approach and content and is based on the Biblical perspective of creation. Students can view science experiments online using ACE connect. The assessors discussed aspects of the science provision with students during the assessment.

Social Studies: Social studies is also a core subject in the ACE Curriculum. The study of world history and geography, from the perspective of God as the designer, creator and controller of the universe, is included in the social studies PACEs. The assessors discussed aspects of the social studies curriculum with the students during the assessment.

Moral Development: Liberty Christian School is a faith-based school and students' moral development is taught in this context. At the beginning of PACE work, students learn a Bible verse, and a corresponding character trait of Jesus. Most students undertake Bible studies. Weekly assemblies and opening exercises include faith-based messages and prayer. A theme for the week, such as trustworthy, is incorporated into the weekly assembly and daily school activities during the week. Discrete time is also allocated to specific topics such as agreeing a set of class rules. Staff and students are currently in the early stages of developing a Code of Behaviour, which will be reflective of the school ethos.

Information Technology (IT): All students are required to undertake an IT course in order to achieve the General Certificate. All students currently enrolled in the school at this level have achieved the *Skillspro* certificate. The school intends to adopt E-PACES in the future.

A wide variety of electives are available for students to study an area which is of personal interest to them.

6.6. Special educational needs

At the time of the assessment the principal identified that children with special educational needs (SEN) were enrolled at the school. The assessors observed students with special educational needs receiving appropriate educational and emotional support during the course of the school day. The assessors also

viewed the ACE programme being utilised at each student's individual level. Supervisors worked with students on an individual basis if necessary to help them access the curriculum, and to support those who needed it during transitions.

It is recommended that a SEN policy is developed, ratified and circulated among the school community.

Section 9 Assessment and Record Keeping

Prior to commencing at the school, students are assessed with a diagnostic test to ascertain their level and are prescribed a tailored level for each subject according to their current ability level. Students then progress through the curriculum at their own individual pace. Each PACE undertaken contains several monitoring check-ups in the form of quizzes that cover an identified section of the PACE. If proficiency in an area is not achieved, the check-up reveals the area that requires attention. Students can then review the identified concept enabling them to proceed to the next section. Upon completion of the activities and check-ups, students prepare themselves through autonomous learning to take the Self-Test. On the day of the assessment, students were observed scoring their Self-Tests independently. Once the Self-Test is successfully completed, students take the PACE test. The PACE test is designed to objectively measure knowledge of the material covered. The detailed results of these assessments are meticulously recorded and retained and are subject to external examination and monitoring. Both manual and digital progress cards are kept for each pupil. Examples of manual progress cards were viewed during the assessment. Test results are shared with parents.

Section 10 Other Relevant Information

The school has been referred to, and are engaging with, the Child Safeguarding Statement Compliance Unit (CSSCU) and the Children First Information and Advice Service (CFIAS) to access additional support in the area of child safeguarding and to ensure that the school is fully compliant under Children's First 2015 legislation. As stated on the R2, the principal confirmed that all staff members have been Garda vetted and have been trained in the implementation of Children First Guidelines 2017. All staff have been trained in the implementation of the school's Child Safeguarding Statement.

Section 11 Evaluation of the Education Provision and Recommendations

Students attending Liberty Christian School are in receipt of an education, intellectual, physical, moral, and social that meets requirements for Section 14 Registration for Students attending the school.

Aspects of the provision that are successful include:

- The individualised and structured nature of the ACE curriculum;
- The spacious physical environment of the school within the wider community of the Limerick Christian Centre;
- The ACE model requires that learning is assessed regularly to ensure that mastery is achieved prior to the introduction of new concepts;
- The availability of Desktop computers for pupil use;
- The positive relationship with parents and the regular reporting on their child's progress.
- The close collaborative practices between staff members.
- The re-introduction of art into the provision.

Recommendations regarding provision:

Governance

To ensure robust governance structures are in place for the future development of the school, consideration should be given to the following:

- It would be beneficial to schedule formal, minuted, whole staff meetings at regular intervals throughout the year. I recommend that a minimum of one such meeting is scheduled to take place each term.
- The development, ratification and circulation of relevant administrative and organisational policies, such as an Admission's Policy and a Staff Absence Policy to aid the successful operation of the school.
- The development of a strategic plan, with stated goals and objectives, will help give focus to the future development of the school.
- Interactions with the board of management should be formalised and should include a regular update in the form of a formal principal's report to the board.

Teaching and Learning

- In order to provide students with a balanced range of learning activities it is recommended that the areas of music and drama are re-introduced into the provision. The expertise of the wider school community could be utilised to enhance the students learning experiences in these areas.
- In order to enhance teaching and learning consideration should be given to arranging for external speakers to come into the school to facilitate workshops or presentations to the students on topics which are of interest or relevance to them.

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 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 12 Discussion of Finding of Report with Principal

The report was discussed with Ms Mary Kavanagh, school principal, at the conclusion of the visit on the 26 February 2025. We discussed the procedures that would follow. It was stated that the recommendation would be to retain the students of Liberty Christian School on the register. The final decision regarding registration will be made by the Alternative Education Assessment and Registration Panel - Tusla, Child and Family Agency.

Section 13 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 Liberty Christian 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