

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

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

**Independent School  
 Review Assessment Report**

**Name of School**

Liberty Christian School

**Address**

Mungret College, Mungret, Co. Limerick

**Name of Principal/Director**

Dorothy Hall

**Name of Assessor/s**

Lisa Duffy  
 Paula Callaghan

**Date of Assessment**

14<sup>th</sup> December 2022 (remote) and 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2023 (onsite)

**Date of Final Report**

15<sup>th</sup> June 2023

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## Section 1 Background Information

### 1.1. School Hours

Opening Time:	08:15		
Closing time:	14:45 (14:00 On Fridays)		
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	
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If no, please give date on which school commenced operation

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

(Normally interview should take place with the principal)

Sharon O Curry (Vice-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 form R2 completed by the principal.
- An interview with the Vice-Principal (currently covering for the principal).
- Classroom visits.
- Observation of a sample of learning tasks completed by the pupils.
- Observation of the educational materials in use.
- The school website.

## Section 2 General Information and School Context

Liberty Christian School is a co-educational, independent 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. The school is set up as a limited company by the Limerick Christian Church. They subsidise the school's funding and own the property. The principal, Dorothy Hall, was one of the founding members of the school. Parents pay annual fees for their children and understand that the ethos of the school is based on Christian principles. However, children of different denominations are welcome to attend the school.

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 small pupil teacher ratio and provides a family-like environment for its students. Children learn to care about others and treat each other with kindness and respect. The characteristics of Jesus Christ are taught, and these qualities of character are highlighted and reinforced throughout the school day.

For the purposes of registration there are currently nineteen pupils enrolled in the school. Due to the low enrolment numbers, pupils are all taught in the same room. Students of all ability levels are welcomed. It is hoped that the school will expand in the future to have a separate pre-school, primary school and secondary school.

The aim of the school 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"*.

## Section 3 The Principal and Staff

Staffing at the school consists of four supervisors. (Supervisor is the preferential term to teacher). Dorothy Hall is the principal, while there is also the vice principal (currently covering for Ms. Hall) and a supervisor. There is a coordinator of the International Certificate of Christian Education (ICCE) which second-level students aim to achieve. She also supervises, together with other staff members who are monitors. They have supervisory and moderating functions. One staff member is heavily involved in extracurricular activities, teaching Drama and Physical Education (PE). Another staff member volunteers in the school on Thursday and Fridays. Another separate staff member also acts as an administrator.

## Section 4 Time Devoted to Education

The school follows the primary school calendar. Pupils are expected to arrive at school at 08:15 to score their homework in advance of the start of the school day. They also set their goals for the day. From 08:45 – 09:00 mini assemblies take place. During this time, children recite a pledge to the Christian flag and to the Bible, pray for special intentions, and listen to a Christian message. Packets

of Accelerated Christian Education (PACE) work commences at 09:00. School officially ends at 14:45 from Monday to Thursday and at 14:00 on Friday. Morning break is from 10:30-11:00 while lunch break is from 12:30- 13:15. Pupils receive mini stretch breaks throughout the day.

## **Section 5 The Learning Environment**

Liberty Christian Church has ownership of the extensive college buildings. However, only parts of these buildings are occupied by the school for its daily use. Formal academic learning takes place in a spacious room. 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, pupils have access to prerequisites for volleyball, basketball, and ping-pong. An outside, enclosed, tarmacked area is used for games at breaktime. There are plans to visually enhance this area in the near future.

The original college chapel is used for prayer and religious services. An office is available for administrative duties to be carried out.

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 used by the school's students.

The school has a supply of books for children's course work as well as for leisure reading. Pupils have access to five personal computers to support their studies. Educational games and DVDs are also available. A large map of the world is painted on to the classroom wall and posters with positive mantras are on display throughout the school. Educational posters and examples of children's work are also on display.

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

## **Section 6 The Educational Activities**

The ACE (*Accelerated Christian Education*) curriculum is utilised in the school. This programme is highly structured and individualised, 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 monitors complete goal card recording (GCR). Under this system pupils quickly become independent learners, taking responsibility for their own learning.

The class has supervisors who are available to give individualised help to a student as required. Pupils raise a 'flag' to request help.

The curriculum consists of six core subjects – Mathematics, English, Science, Social Studies, Literature and Word-building. At each level of a subject there are units or 'packages' called PACES - twelve PACES in each level. Completion of a PACE takes between one and two weeks. Pupils work in blocks of approximately 40 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. Work generally consists of an assignment followed by an assessment which the child completes, scores and records. The detailed results of these assessments are meticulously recorded and retained.

A random sample of PACE tests are sent to England to be checked by an external moderator. The vice principal informed me that records may also be inspected at any time by personnel from the ICCE body to ensure standards are being reached to merit the awarding of the appropriate level of the ICCE accreditation. Senior pupils aim to earn a recognised qualification similar in accreditation to the Leaving Certificate. Many past pupils have achieved this qualification and have continued on to third level courses.

## 6.1. General information

Parental involvement is deemed to be important, and parents fully support the work of the school. They are actively involved in fundraising activities. Parent teacher meetings take place twice per academic year and parents also receive an end of year written report. Staff ensure that parents are contacted at the earliest opportunity if they have any concerns relating to a child.

Staff meet approximately once per month to plan for extracurricular activities, upcoming events or to review children's progress. This ensures that everyone is kept fully informed, and that all pupils are appropriately supported. Staff are retrained in implementing the ACE curriculum every four years to ensure that standards are maintained. Training is offered onsite by ICCE.

The principal, Dorothy Hall, represents the school on the Board of Management and reports are made informally to the board. The school is registered as a charity.

For the purposes of registration there are currently 19 pupils on the roll.

## 6.2. Language and literacy skills

The programme for language and literacy encompasses the full range of activities to develop oral, reading and writing skills. 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. Once per month pupils prepare and make an oral presentation based on a topic of their own choosing. *Speech* is also offered as an elective subject. Pupils who undertake this elective learn, at a deeper level, about debate and making oral presentations.

A structured and comprehensive American phonics programme is utilised in the school. Pupils have opportunities to read for pleasure and to read for a purpose. They regularly write book reports based on a book of their choice. There are also prescribed texts in literature.

Pupils are exposed to cursive writing from age seven and this style is used throughout a pupil's schooling. Pupils are exposed to a variety of writing genres through their PACE work, developing their writing skills as they progress through the levels.

### **6.3. Numeracy**

The numeracy programme is structured and highly individualised, with pupils working at their own level and pace. The curriculum encompasses all key areas of numeracy and is presented in a sequential and structured manner. Mathematical skills needed for higher education and practical life are developed through daily activities and practice.

### **6.4. Irish**

Pupils subscribe to the *Rosetta Stone* programme for language learning. They choose the language which they would like to study, with many students commencing this at age twelve approximately, which would coincide with the start of second level education.

*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**

Music, Visual Arts and Drama are taught in the school. Seasonal activities are included in the Arts curriculum and pupils partake in an annual Christmas concert.

A Canadian Drama curriculum is followed and is enjoyed by the pupils. It is hoped that a student's confidence in speaking in front of others would increase through participation in these classes.

Pupils learn the basics of music and partake in song singing, enhancing weekly assemblies and worship with singing. They also have access to musical instruments such as keyboards, bucket drums and bongos.

Physical Education is taught by a staff member in six-week blocks and pupils are offered a wide variety of activities. They partake in activities such as volleyball, basketball, high intensity interval training (HIIT), tag rugby and walking. Pupils have access to a large room upstairs which can be used in inclement weather. The school is situated in close proximity to Mungret Park. The facilities of this public park and recreation area are availed of by the school's students.

Social Environmental and scientific Education (SESE) is taught from the creator's point of view. Science is one of the ACE Curriculum's core subjects. A wide variety of electives are available for pupils to study an area which is of personal interest to them.

Liberty Christian School is a faith-based school and pupils' social, emotional and moral development is taught in this context. The school community is close-knit, with respect and love at the heart of its ethos. Mini assemblies take place every morning and Christian messages are included in these. Respect and acceptance permeate the school day and a non-judgemental environment is prevalent in the school. A key message for students is: God created you and he doesn't make mistakes. You are who you are, and we love you. All students partake in Bible studies. On occasions external guests are brought in to conduct anti-bullying workshops or workshops around aspects of personal safety or safety online.

The school will soon be offering the *Future Kids* programme to all students. This programme focuses on learning, developing and consolidating IT skills, helping to prepare students for the modern world.

## 6.6. Special educational needs

The school is fully inclusive and welcoming to all. The ACE programme is worked at each child's individual level. Staff members are attuned to the individual needs of all pupils and adaptations may be made if deemed necessary. For example, a child with additional needs may be given a double office space if this would be beneficial. If a child requires a special needs assistant (SNA) the parents organise and fund this.

## Section 7 Assessment and Record Keeping

Assessment exercises and record keeping are an integral part of the ACE curriculum. On enrolment in the school, diagnostic tests are used to determine the child's starting point in the curriculum. This is based on the child's own level of ability rather than their chronological age. Testing is undertaken at the end of each lesson and the children are trained in how to score their own work. The supervisor and pupil engage in daily one-on-one conferencing around how they are progressing. The mark required to pass each assignment is high and repetition/revision is required if the pupil does not make the required grade.

The supervisor maintains a detailed record of the children's performances. Tests are scored by a supervisor, moderated by the vice principal and sent to England for further moderation to take place. These grades at senior level are recognised by Ireland's Central Applications Office to qualify students for college course entry.

Aggregated grades are also inspected and validated by the ACE international assessors (Christian Education Europe Ltd.) to ensure adherence to correct procedures and that required standards are maintained.

## **Section 8 Other Relevant Information**

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. The Child Safeguarding Statement (CSS) has been provided as part of the R2 Information Update Form 2022-23 and includes the names of the appointed Designated Liaison Person (DLP) and Deputy Designated Liaison Person (DDL). The acting principal was informed of the requirement for the CSS including details of the DLP and DDL to be prominently displayed in the entrance hall and it was confirmed that the CSS will be displayed following the Assessment.

## **Section 9 Evaluation of the Education Provision and Recommendations**

In my opinion, the education provided to the students in Liberty Christian School may continue to be characterised as *"a certain minimum education, moral, intellectual and social"*. The aspects of the provision that are successful include:

- The ACE curriculum, which is offered to the pupils, is highly structured. It offers all pupils the opportunity to work at their own level.
- Individualised support is available for children who require it.
- The learning environment consists of a spacious classroom, common area and play area.
- The emphasis on the development of favourable character traits in the pupils and the affirmation and reinforcement of positive behaviours.
- The spirit of inclusivity that prevails and permeates the school atmosphere.
- The opportunities provided for non-academic learning experiences.
- Staff who encourage and support pupils on their educational journey.
- The positive relationship with parents and the regular reporting on their child's progress.
- The pursuit of high standards in academic work, particularly in the core subject areas.

*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 vice principal at the conclusion of the visit on the 02 February 2023. It was stated that the recommendation would be to register the pupils 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 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 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**