

Section 14 Education (Welfare) Act, 2000

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

**Independent School
Review Assessment Report**

Name of School

Loreto College Junior School

Address

53 St Stephen's Green

Telephone

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Name of Principal/Director

Tracy Hogan

Name of Assessor/s

Richard Coughlan and Jane Merriman

Date of Assessment

22nd September 2022

Date of Final Report

15th June 2023

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Section 1 Background Information

1.1. School Hours

Opening Time:	08:00		
Closing time:	14:45 (junior classes: 13:45)		
Main breaks during the day:	10:20	to	10:45
	12:15	to	13:00

Is school in operation for more than five years?

Yes	
00/00/0000	

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 Tracy Hogan

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

- Review Assessment Report of 2017
- An interview with the principal
- Classroom visits
- Observation of learning tasks completed by the pupils
- Observation of the educational materials in use
- School website
- School documentation:
 - School calendar
 - Timetables
 - Child safeguarding statement and risk assessment
 - Code of behaviour
 - Anti-bullying policy
 - Safety statement Safety statement

Section 2 General Information and School Context

Loreto College Junior School (LCJS) is a fee-charging primary school which is owned by the Loreto Education Trust. The school has served its pupils and their families for more than 100 years. It has an enrolment of 205 pupils. The school is situated in the centre of Dublin on St Stephen's Green. It shares its site and its building with the Loreto College Secondary School. While the school has a Catholic ethos, inspired by the educational and religious philosophy of the Loreto tradition, girls of all backgrounds and religions are welcomed. Pupils in the school come from a range of backgrounds.

The school's board of management includes a Loreto sister, nominated by the school's trustees. The school's mission statement describes the school as *"a caring Christian community in which pupils have the opportunity to grow academically, creatively, emotionally, physically, and spiritually in a healthy, safe environment"*. The development of the potential of each individual child is central to the education provided.

The principal is in her fourth year in the role. She emphasises communication with parents. They are welcomed into the school. There are generally six meetings of the parents' association each year. The principal reports to parents at these meetings. There is a high attendance at the AGM of the association, which is now held online and followed a number of days later by a coffee morning. There is an annual parent teacher meeting for each class. A newsletter is issued each term. The school uses the school administration software package *Aladdin* to give parents alerts on their phones.

The school's code of behaviour promotes positive pupil behaviour through pupils having respect and consideration for others.

Section 3 The Principal and Staff

The Loreto school staff consists of the principal and eight classroom teachers, including the deputy principal. The school has two full-time and one part-time learning support teacher. The school employs a part-time science and an information and communications technology (ICT) teacher who teaches for three days each week. A Spanish and drama teacher is employed on a part-time basis. There are two full-time special-needs assistants (SNA's), a full-time secretary, and a part-time caretaker. The school has a part-time physical education (PE) teacher, and the PE department of the senior school assists with the provision of Physical Education.

The current principal was appointed shortly before the pandemic. Leading the school in addressing the associated challenges has been a large part of her work up to relatively recently. The school's digital learning plan was accelerated so that pupils' lessons could continue uninterrupted online. The school continues to be conscious of the need to identify and address possible learning deficits in pupils due to the disruption of their education due to the impact of Covid restrictions.

School management has ensured that an appropriate range of policies has been adopted. They are reviewed as appropriate and contribute to the smooth running of the school. All members of school staff have been Garda vetted. Staff meetings generally occur every half term. They underpin the collaboration and communication among staff members that was evident during the assessment.

The school has a safety statement that is updated annually. The school's child safeguarding statement is in place and is being implemented. A designated liaison person (DLP) and a deputy designated liaison person (DDL) have been appointed. A child protection risk assessment has been prepared by the school that includes procedures to be observed to ensure, as far as practicable, that pupils are safe from harm. The Childs Safeguarding statement, including identification of the DLP and the DDL is displayed in a prominent position at the reception area of the school.

Section 4 Time Devoted to Education

Loreto College Junior School is in operation for 165 days each year. It closes each June immediately before the resumption of the State examinations. This closure is necessitated by the proximity of the Loreto College senior school. The school opens each morning at 08:00. There is early morning supervision until the beginning of lessons at 09:00. Teachers are in the school each day from about 08:30. There are two breaks during the school day - from 10:20 to 10:45, and from 12:15 to 13:00 approximately. School finishes for the two infant classes at 13:45 and for the remaining classes at 14:45. Children whose parents require after-school care are taken care of each day until 15:45 PM, when the senior school closes. The daily after-school homework club is used by pupils who have sisters in the senior school.

Section 5 The Learning Environment

The Loreto College Junior School building is well-equipped, spacious, and suitable to its purpose. Following a disastrous fire in 1986, the school was rebuilt. It has eight classrooms. These are attractively decorated with displays of learning materials and provision for storage of pupils' resources and completed learning tasks. While most classrooms are on the ground floor, the sixth-class classroom, along with two learning-support rooms and the mathematics resource room, are on the first floor. The school has two small rooms that are used for learning support. There is a mathematics resource room. The school has a dedicated ICT room that is used also for drama as required. Some of the spaces allocated for PE and music are shared with the senior school. The school has a large assembly room used for drama and other activities, which has tiered seating and a large floor area.

The school has other teaching and learning areas that are outdoors and also contained in designated separate buildings. Some of these are shared with the senior school. There is access to an all-weather pitch, a sports hall, and a performance space. Nearby churches are used by the school for its religious services. The school's library has recently been dispersed to provide collections of reading material in each of the classrooms.

All classes have access to *iPads*, which are used in teaching and learning in multiple learning areas. The *iPads* are regarded by the school as an additional tool to help pupils' learning; they do not replace books in classrooms. Introduced last year, their use has spread downward from the senior classes. Each pupil has access to a designated *iPad*.

Section 6 The Educational Activities

6.1. General information

The *Primary School Curriculum* is the curriculum of the school, and it is taught in its entirety. The presence of a teacher for science and ICT on the school's staff is an indicator of the school's commitment to the development of science and ICT skills in its pupils. The availability of *iPads* further supports this approach. Older pupils are encouraged and facilitated to help the younger ones in using ICT.

One reflection of the central importance that the school accords to the development of pupils' literacy and numeracy is that classes in mathematics and English are frequently held early in the school day.

Class, school, and curriculum planning take place at an individual teacher level and at a school level. Staff have three planning days in August before the school year begins. They have planning days in June also, at the end of the school year.

The school is involved in a range of initiatives that complement pupils' class learning. The school's *Amber Flag* committee concerns itself with the promotion of pupils' well-being and mental health. It runs a positivity week for pupils each year before the Easter holidays. As with other Irish Loreto schools, Loreto College Junior School helps to support the Loreto Primary School Rumbek in South Sudan. It does this through a sponsored walk organised before Easter each year. The school participates in the *Green Schools* programme that promotes environmental awareness. It also runs a programme with *Motus Learning* over three weeks each year for its sixth-class pupils to support them in their transition to second level.

During visits to classrooms, examples of pupils' work were viewed. The range of teaching resources available in each classroom was impressive. A relaxed effective relationship between teachers and their pupils was observed. It was evident from the enthusiasm of the pupils and their level of engagement in each of the classrooms visited that the quality of teaching and learning in place is high.

6.2. Language and literacy skills

The school is using the new primary language curriculum for English. The school emphasises the development of phonological awareness in the junior classes. The development of pupils' penmanship skills is emphasised throughout the school. In each classroom, there is a selection of suitable books available that pupils can borrow. All classrooms have colourful displays of learning materials.

The school has pupils with mother tongues other than English. Attention is paid to the development of the English language skills of these pupils.

Sixth class is split for English into mixed-ability groups. This is done so that pupils can receive more individual time and attention.

6.3. Numeracy

There is a strong emphasis throughout the school on building pupils' mathematical knowledge and skills. To support this, additional teaching resources have been provided so that classes from third to sixth are divided for mathematics. This facilitates teachers giving attention to the needs of individual pupils. Small group learning support is provided for mathematics. This can be used, for example, by pupils catching up in the case of time missed due to illness. One of the after-effects of the pandemic has been the need for the school to support pupils in overcoming mathematics deficits that may have arisen as a consequence during the pandemic.

The school takes part in *Maths Week Ireland* each year.

6.4. Irish

All pupils study Irish. The school uses the *Abair Liom* scheme, which includes access to many online resources. Each class has a daily Irish lesson. Irish is used throughout the school in informational and instructional signs. This serves to heighten pupils' awareness of Irish as a means of communication.

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

The school has a wide range of learning areas on its curriculum. These include programme that address pupils' social and emotional development. The curriculum includes ICT, drama, Spanish, PE, art, and music.

The Physical Education programme emphasises pupil well-being. Each class has two lessons each week for PE; the class teacher takes one of these and the other is taken by a qualified PE teacher. The PE programme for classes is planned on a modular basis, with classes taking different sports in succession.

The school is aiming to bring European languages into the curriculum. Pupils in all classes now learn Spanish. The pupils are reported to love learning Spanish. Classes from first to sixth have Spanish on two days each week. Infant classes have one day each week allocated for Spanish classes.

Each class has drama on one day each week. All classes have a dedicated computer lesson each week.

Religious education (RE) is a core part of the school's curriculum. Pupils whose parents do not wish them to take part in RE class remain in the class. They may, in consultation with the teacher and parents, take part in other tasks and projects while the RE lesson is taking place.

Art and music have always been a very strong feature in the school. The teaching of the subjects is helped by the many resources that are available to the school due to its centre city location. Music may be taught by the class teacher or by a specialist teacher.

The school is implementing SPHE, RSE, and *Stay Safe*. It has a range of resources available for these subjects. Pupils' social and emotional development is addressed in the curriculum through the *Stay Safe* and the *Walk Tall* programmes as well as the *Weaving Well-Being* programme. The *Weaving Well-Being* programme aims to enhance well-being in children and consists of 10 lessons for each class.

Pupils participate in debates and the school recently won an inter schools' debating competition. The school has a GAA football team.

6.6. Special educational needs

The school has the resources required to support pupils who have special educational needs, including addressing the learning needs of pupils of exceptionally high ability. It has two full-time special-needs assistants. In addition to having 2.5 learning-support teachers, the school supports staff learning and upskilling. Some class teachers are taking a course in pupil assessment and screening. Staff members have access to relevant teacher education courses.

Class teachers identify pupils who require additional learning support. At the time of the Review Assessment, the school was finalising the school's timetables for learning support. Depending on requirements, this support is given either outside the pupil's classroom or in the classroom, with two teachers present.

Standardised tests are given to classes each year. Among these are the *Drumcondra Test of Early Literacy* and the *Drumcondra Test of Early Numeracy*. The school does not have access to the *National Educational Psychological Service*. Where a pupil needs an educational or clinical assessment, it must be arranged by their parents in consultation with the school.

Section 7 Assessment and Record Keeping

Ongoing pupil assessment is an integral part of teaching and learning in the school. Assessment takes place as part of teaching in each class. There are also more formal assessments carried out to measure pupils' progress. Most tests are on a weekly basis and take the form of informal quizzes, for example, spelling tests. The school is using a new online program for spelling assessment, "*Spellings for Me*", that is differentiated so that pupils make progress at their own pace.

As well as the formal parent-teacher meeting each year, parents are facilitated to meet the class teacher where there is a concern. The school issues a report at the end of each school year.

Section 8 Other Relevant Information

The following policies and documentations were made available:

- School calendar
- Timetables
- Child safeguarding statement and risk assessment
- Code of behaviour
- Anti-bullying policy
- Safety statement

Section 9 Evaluation of the Education Provision and Recommendations

The education provided to the pupils of Loreto Junior school can be characterised as “a certain minimum education, moral, intellectual, and social”.

The reasons that that this judgement has been made in respect of the educational provision in the school include the following:

- The effective leadership by the school principal in all areas of school activity, especially in relation to managing the impact of the pandemic, and the strong relationship with parents
- The school’s code of behaviour promotes positive pupil behaviour through pupils having respect and consideration for others.
- School management ensures that an appropriate range of policies has been adopted and that they are reviewed as appropriate.
- The availability of qualified teachers to teach the school’s curriculum
- The quality of the teacher-pupil relationships and the commitment of teachers to their pupils’ education, as demonstrated during the classroom visits
- The full implementation of an appropriate curriculum
- The quality of the learning environment of the school
- The incorporation of ICT in teaching and learning in the school
- The key role the school has given to pupil assessment in teaching and learning, including differentiation to meet the learning needs of pupils
- The development of each pupil’s literacy and numeracy skills as a central aim of whole school planning
- The school gives the highest priority to the care and wellbeing of its pupils.

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 finding of the assessment as contained in this report was discussed with the principal, Ms Tracy Hogan at the conclusion of the visit on 22nd September 2022. It was stated that the recommendation would be to retain the pupils of Loreto College Junior School, St Stephen's Green, Dublin 2 on the register for children educated in places other than a recognised school. 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 Loreto College Junior 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