

**ALTERNATIVE
EDUCATION
ASSESSMENT &
REGISTRATION**

Section 14 Education (Welfare) Act, 2000

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

**Independent School
Preliminary Assessment Report**

Name of School

Monaghan Waldorf School

Address

The Wetlands, Clones Road, Derryvally, Ballybay,
Co. Monaghan, A75 HF78.

Name of Principal/Director

Jamie Macleod-Elliott

Name of Assessor/s

Paul Sloan
Jane Merriman

Date of Assessment

20th March 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	4
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	Assessment and Record Keeping	8
Section 8	Other Relevant Information	8
Section 9	Evaluation of the Education Provision and Recommendations	9
Section 10	Discussion of Finding of Report with Principal	10
Section 11	Outcome	10

Section 1 Background Information

1.1. School Hours

Opening Time:	09:00		
Closing time:	13:00		
Main breaks during the day:	10:45	to	11:30
	00:00	to	00:00

Is school in operation for more than five years?

No

If no, please give date on which school commenced operation

01/09/2024

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

(Normally interview should take place with the principal)

Jamie Macleod-Elliott

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
- Visit to the premises and discussion with the principal
- Discussions with teacher and pupils during a classroom visit
- 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

Monaghan Waldorf School is a co-educational independent school, delivering a Waldorf-inspired education focused on nurturing the whole child through the Waldorf methods.

Founded in 2024 by a group of individuals seeking an alternative educational model, the school aims to foster individual development, initiative, and a lifelong love of learning through a dynamic, teacher-led curriculum that balances structure with responsiveness to each child's needs.

The school is governed by Monaghan Waldorf School CLG, a board of directors oversees operations, supported by committees managing daily activities.

The school is located in a modern and well designed and equipped building, previously used as Health Service Executive (HSE) offices. The building is situated in the beautiful landscape of the wetlands in Ballybay, County Monaghan. There is effective signage for the school located both on the entrance to the long entrance and on the school building.

There are other services associated with the Monaghan Waldorf School operating within the school building, these include the Ballybay Kindergarten CLG, which has a visible presence and a weekly parent/child playgroup. These provisions are for children between the ages 0-6 years.

The curriculum as described to the assessor emphasises experiential learning, artistry, and connection to nature, integrating daily and seasonal experiences, hands-on activities, and student-created educational books to promote imagination, willpower, and responsibility in preparation for a meaningful life.

Section 3 The Principal and Staff

Monaghan Waldorf School is led by Principal Jamie Macleod-Elliott, a founding member and board director. Jamie has completed a one-year foundation course in Steiner Education and serves as the company secretary, voluntarily managing the school's administrative duties.

The teaching staff comprises of:

- A bridge class teacher and founding member, who has completed a foundation course in Steiner Education and maintains a lifelong connection to anthroposophy.
- An additional teacher responsible for Spanish and handwork instruction, possessing a two-year Waldorf teacher training qualification.
- An occupational therapist who provides teaching cover on an ad hoc basis depending on needs.

An experienced Waldorf educator with over 25 years of international teaching and leadership experience, holding a BA in Art Education (Waldorf) has been employed and is due to start fulltime in September 2025.

All staff members are declared Garda vetted and have received training under the Children First Act 2015 and in the Children First National Guidelines. The school's Child Safeguarding Statement, compliant with the Children First Act 2015, is prominently displayed. This dedicated team, support the school's Waldorf philosophy through individualised, holistic education.

Section 4 Time Devoted to Education

Monaghan Waldorf School operates from 09:00 to 13:00, Monday through Friday, providing approximately 20 hours of in school time per week. The school follows a standard mainstream academic calendar comprising 182 instructional days per academic calendar year.

The daily timetable balances core academic subjects such as literacy and numeracy with Waldorf specific educational experiences, including eurythmy, handwork, and outdoor learning. These activities are integrated to align with the developmental stages of the students, in keeping with the principles of Waldorf pedagogy.

This structured approach ensures adequate time is allocated while providing a rounded, age-appropriate, and holistic learning experience for all enrolled pupils.

Section 5 The Learning Environment

The learning environment at Monaghan Waldorf School is conducive to nurture a supportive, and developmentally appropriate atmosphere, in alignment with the Waldorf philosophy of holistic education. The building is a light filled and welcoming space, there is an attractive entrance area. The building accommodates the associated Steiner early years provision, along with two classrooms, an office space, storage space and utility areas. Classrooms are decorated in soft pastel hues, furnished with natural materials, wooden furniture, naturally dyed fabrics, and handcrafted decorations. The interiors create a homely, calming space that fosters creativity and compliments the school's setting within idyllic surroundings. The school makes extensive use of its outdoor environment, particularly the garden and the surrounding natural areas of the Wetlands location. Regular outdoor activities including gardening, nature walks, and free play are embedded in the weekly schedule, encouraging experiential learning and cultivating a strong connection to the surrounding nature.

All facilities and activities are carried out in accordance with the school's Child Safeguarding Statement and the Children First National Guidelines. Students learn in a safe, inclusive, and secure environment that supports their educational, emotional, and social development.

Student work on display was viewed by the assessors during the observed visit

Section 6 The Educational Activities

6.1. General information

Monaghan Waldorf School provides a curriculum that is designed to align with the developmental stages of its primary level pupils, integrating academic, practical, and artistic activities, to foster intellectual, emotional, and physical growth. The Waldorf philosophy and the educational programme emphasise creativity, imagination, and hands-on learning aimed at nurturing a love of learning. Core academic subjects, such as literacy, numeracy, and languages, are delivered through experiential methods, including storytelling, rhythmic movement, and expression. The core areas of learning are complemented by Waldorf-specific activities such as eurythmy, handwork, and nature-based learning. Seasonal festivals, gardening, and weekly forest school sessions were identified as a further means to compliment the school curriculum, cultivating environmental awareness and community engagement.

The curriculum at Monaghan Waldorf School aims to foster holistic development through a teacher led approach, balancing structured learning with responsiveness to individual needs. Aligned with Rudolf Steiner's educational principles, it integrates academic subjects with artistic and practical activities to nurture creativity, critical thinking, and personal responsibility. Nature studies, including regular gardening and nature walks, nurtures environmental awareness and a sense of responsibility. The curriculum is delivered through "main lesson" blocks, which focus on a single subject matter for several weeks, supplemented by ongoing timetabled lessons in music, art, handwork, and outdoor education. This structure supports a comprehensive education, preparing students for lifelong learning in alignment with the school's mission to foster courage, open-mindedness, and personal responsibility.

6.2. Language and literacy skills

Language and literacy skills at Monaghan Waldorf School are developed through creative and immersive methods that enhance linguistic expression and imagination. Daily storytelling sessions engage pupils, promoting vocabulary, strengthening listening skills, fostering a love for language, and laying the foundation for literacy development.

Writing is introduced through artistic activities, which begin in the early stages of the school cycle. These include activities such as drawing forms that evolve into letters enabling students to connect sounds to symbols within the context of the lesson. Reading follows, with students creating their own '*main lesson books*'. These individual *copybooks*, used instead of standardised textbooks, reinforce learning through understanding and creativity.

English, the primary language of instruction, is supplemented by lessons in Spanish. Spanish is taught by one of the teachers, there is an emphasises on conversational skills and cultural context. It is often integrated with handwork activities, methods that are in line with the Waldorf philosophy.

6.3. Numeracy

Numeracy is taught through experiential and rhythmic methods to instil an appreciation for mathematical concepts and their practical applications. In early years, arithmetic is introduced using kinaesthetic activities, such as clapping and stepping to internalise number patterns and operations, making abstract concepts tangible and engaging. As the students' progress, geometry is explored through artistic exercises, like drawing geometric forms, to highlight patterns and beauty. Practical applications, such as measuring in cooking or building projects during gardening or handwork, demonstrate the relevance of numeracy in real-life scenarios. This approach develops logical thinking, problem-solving skills, and confidence, tailored to students' developmental stages and is in line with the Waldorf philosophy.

6.4. Irish

The Irish language programme at Monaghan Waldorf School introduces students to Gaeilge through an oral and cultural approach, fostering fluency and appreciation for local heritage. Children engage with Irish through songs, poems, and simple conversations, building confidence in spoken language from an early age. Irish myths and legends are incorporated into storytelling sessions, enriching language learning with cultural context and deepening students' connection to Ireland's heritage. This approach, integrated into the broader curriculum, supports linguistic diversity and cultural awareness, aligning with the school's holistic educational philosophy.

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 curriculum encompasses a diverse range of subjects to nurture creativity, physical development, and practical skills. Artistic Activities include daily engagement in painting, drawing, and modelling with natural materials, enhancing creativity and fine motor skills. Music and Movement involve singing, playing instruments like recorders, and eurythmy, a Waldorf-specific expressive movement art that promotes musicality and coordination. Handwork, such as knitting and woodworking, develops patience, dexterity, and an appreciation for craftsmanship, with activities led by Waldorf experienced staff. Outdoor Education, facilitated by a certified forest school instructor, includes weekly sessions in the school's garden and nearby natural areas, promoting environmental stewardship and physical

health. Social and Personal Education is embedded in daily interactions, guided by the school's Code of Behaviour, with pastoral support provided as needed.

6.6. Special educational needs

Monaghan Waldorf School benefits from a low student-to-teacher ratio, which enables personalised support tailored to each child's unique needs and learning pace. This individualised attention helps foster confidence and engagement for students.

The school also implements inclusive teaching practices, employing differentiated instruction strategies that accommodate a wide range of learning styles and abilities. This commitment ensures an inclusive, welcoming learning environment where all students are supported and encouraged to reach their potential.

Section 7 Assessment and Record Keeping

Monaghan Waldorf School maintains a comprehensive attendance register to ensure accurate tracking of student presence. Throughout the academic year, student work is systematically catalogued, providing a record of individual progress and learning experiences. Teachers regularly record detailed observations related to students' social, academic, and developmental milestones. Parent-teacher meetings are held periodically, with documented summaries to facilitate communication and collaborative support for each child's growth. Observational records are shared with parents during these meetings. The school employs qualitative assessment methods that prioritise holistic development over standardised testing.

Section 8 Other Relevant Information

Monaghan Waldorf School operates under a community-driven governance model, where parent and volunteer involvement is integral to the school's effective functioning. The school actively encourages and facilitates parental participation in a variety of school activities, including seasonal festivals and community events. This collaborative approach aims to foster a sense of belonging, shared responsibility, and partnership between families and the school community.

Arrangements for child safeguarding and associated procedures were reviewed at the time of the assessment.

Section 9 Evaluation of the Education Provision and Recommendations

It is the assessor's opinion that Monaghan Waldorf provides an education that can be characterised as offering a *certain minimum education, moral, intellectual, and social*.

Successful Aspects of the Provision:

- The principal's enthusiasm and commitment and her active participation in classroom activities.
- A curriculum designed to provide a well-rounded education to pupils in line with the Waldorf philosophy.
- The commitment of staff to delivering the school's vision.
- Observations at the time of the assessment including, visits to classrooms, conversations with staff and pupils, and review of pupils' work, demonstrated that the school's learning ethos is being implemented.
- The enthusiasm of staff and their engagement with curriculum development and the broader ethos of the school to work towards its overall development.
- Direct engagement with the principal and staff revealed a clear passion for the new school.
- The curriculum structure demonstrates a balanced focus on intellectual, moral, and social development.
- Firsthand observations demonstrated a supportive and engaged learning environment.

Recommendations for Further Development:

- Develop a clear and consistent framework for assessments, incorporating qualitative methods such as portfolios and observations, and establish clear assessment and reporting procedures.
- Introduce the use of standardised reporting templates for recording and communicating student progress and set a regular reporting schedule.
- Arrange for teacher training in Waldorf specific assessment and communication methods.
- Align the above points with an overarching assessment and communication policy.
- Involve the whole school community in future policy design. This can be achieved by actively involving staff, parents, and pupils in the creation and review of school policies to ensure inclusivity and relevance.
- Strengthen communication with parents by way of sending updates via regular newsletters by email and/or print, make use of a parent portal or app for timely updates or via email if necessary.
- Ensure all communication is clear, consistent, transparent and accessible, and available to parents and encourage open feedback mechanisms to encourage ongoing positive parental input.
- Optimise the use of the educational space; by way of conducting an audit of current space usage to identify opportunities for improvement and better alignment with educational goals, the building has fantastic potential for this.

As the school is in its first year of operation and due to the recent change of principal, it is recommended that an ongoing monitoring review is carried out within 6 months of the issuing of the final assessment report.

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 assessor spoke with the principal and indicated that this report would be positive, affirming good practice while also suggesting further enhancements, as outlined in the recommendations.

The initial findings of the report were discussed with the principal at the conclusion of the visit on 20 March 2025. It was stated that the recommendation would be to register the pupils of the Monaghan Waldorf School on the register for children in receipt of an education in a place other than a recognised school. 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 Preliminary Assessment, the Registration Panel decided that children attending Monaghan Waldorf School will be registered 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.

The registration is subject to a periodic review by the Child and Family Agency.