

Section 14 Education (Welfare) Act, 2000

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

**Independent School
Review Assessment Report**

Name of School

Monaghan Waldorf School

Address

Wetlands, Ballybay, Monaghan

Name of Principal/Director

Jamie Macleod-Elliott

Name of Assessor/s

Paul Sloan
Jane Merriman

Date of Assessment

15th December 2025

Date of Final Report

31st March 2026

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Section 1 Background Information

1.1. School Hours

Opening Time:	09.30 Monday to Thursday		
Closing time:	12.30 Monday to Thursday		
Main breaks during the day:	10.30	to	11.00
	N/A	to	00:00

Is school in operation for more than five years?

No

If no, please give date on which school commenced operation

September 2024

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

(Normally interview should take place with the principal)

- Jamie MacLeod-Elliott (Teaching Principal)
- Teacher (part time)

1.3. Sources of evidence on which report is based

This review assessment report is based on the following sources of evidence:

- An onsite assessment visit to the school premises on 15 December 2025
- Discussion with the Principal, Jamie Macleod-Elliott
- Observation of a 'Main Lesson' in Class 1
- Discussions with a teacher during the onsite visit
- Discussions with pupils during the classroom visit
- Observation of a sample of learning tasks completed by the pupils
- Observation of the educational materials in use
- Review of the school's Annual Update R2 Information Form (updated in November 2025)
- Review of documents provided by the school such as - Calendar 2025/26, Class timetables, and updated policies
- Information available on the school website
- The Preliminary Assessment Report dated 25 June 2025 and a review of the recommendations

Section 2 General Information And School Context

Monaghan Waldorf School is an independent primary school providing a Waldorf/Steiner-inspired education. Founded in 2023 by a group of individuals seeking an alternative educational model, the school is now in its third academic year (2025/26). The school is located within the scenic natural landscape of The Wetlands, Ballybay, a setting that is a significant strength of the provision. The surrounding environment is rich in woodland, water and wildlife and complements Waldorf educational principles, offering daily opportunities for outdoor learning, nature immersion, and seasonal observation. The school's establishment was driven by parental interest and a recognised gap for a locally available Steiner-inspired education. The principal, Jamie, was herself educated in a Waldorf school and brings this lived experience to the provision. Jamie informed the assessors how her own Waldorf educated background has been a key impetus for creating a nurturing, holistic learning environment in Monaghan. The school states that it aims to foster each child's individual development, initiative, and a lifelong love of learning through a dynamic, teacher-led curriculum that balances structure with responsiveness to the needs of each pupil.

The educational provision follows core Waldorf principles, emphasising rhythmic daily and seasonal routines, artistic and practical activities, outdoor exploration, and the celebration of festivals to support healthy child development. Governance is provided by Monaghan Waldorf School CLG. The board meets quarterly, with a planning and vision meeting scheduled for January 2026. Since the last assessor visit, one new board member has joined, while the chair remains unchanged. The principal and a second founder contribute to teaching and day-to-day operational roles within the school.

The school operates from a modern, well-designed, and well-equipped building situated in the beautiful surrounds of Ballybay Wetlands. Clear signage is provided both at the entrance to the long driveway and on the school building itself. Ballybay Kindergarten CLG is associated with Monaghan Waldorf School and shares the building.

Current enrolment consists of one class group, with five students enrolled and four were present on the day of assessment. The school plans to expand as this founding class progresses through the primary cycle. To support this growth, the school is actively recruiting a full-time teacher and working towards expansion and the enrolment of new pupils.

Section 3 The Principal And Staff

The school is led by Principal Jamie Macleod-Elliott, a founding director who oversees both administrative responsibilities and teaching on a voluntary basis. Her leadership is central to the continuity and ethos of the provision.

As noted in the preliminary report, the previously identified teaching team is not in place at the time of this review assessment. Most notably, the school informed the service in September 2025 that the designated Steiner teacher in place to take up the position for the academic year was not available. In response, the school is actively recruiting a new class teacher, the principal reported that interviews are scheduled to take place in the near future.

At present, the school operates with the principal and volunteer teachers.

The principal, who has completed a foundation course in Steiner Education and maintains a lifelong connection to anthroposophy, along with a second volunteer teacher provide day today full-time instruction.

The second teacher is a qualified occupational therapist, bringing professional skills that align well with the developmental and holistic aims of the Waldorf model. In addition, there is a volunteer teacher who delivers Irish instruction once a week and another volunteer responsible for teaching crafts.

The school reports that all individuals working with or in contact with children have been Garda vetted and trained in Children First guidelines. The school's Child Safeguarding Statement is readily accessible and up to date.

Section 4 Time Devoted To Education

The school calendar for 2025/26 outlines operation across three terms—Samhain (Autumn–Winter), Imbolc (Winter–Early Spring), and Bealtaine (Spring–Summer). These terms incorporate standard breaks, bank holidays, and key Waldorf festivals, including Michaelmas (29 September 2025), Martinmas (11 November 2025), Advent Garden (30 November 2025), Candlemas (30 January 2026), and May Day (1 May 2026). Based on the calendar supplied during the assessment, the school is scheduled to be in operation for approximately 167 school days across the academic year.

The school's schedule represents a reduction from the provision noted during the Preliminary Assessment. The overall time devoted to formal education has decreased. An adjustment to the timetable was communicated by the principal at the beginning of the 2025–26 academic year, indicating that the reduced timetable was implemented in response to the Class 1 teacher not taking up the appointed teaching position for the year.

The daily timetable provided is as follows:

Daily Timetable Monday – Thursday (2025–26)

09:30 – Am Scéaláochta & Main Lesson (Monday) / Main Lesson (Tuesday & Thursday) / Handwork (Wednesday)

10:30 – Snack time & outdoor learning

11:30 – Painting (Monday), Cooking (Tuesday), Music (Wednesday), Modelling (Thursday)

12:30 – Home time

The school currently operates a shortened school day and a four-day week.

Further information was provided by the principal to AEARS in January 2026 regarding a temporary amendment to the timetable for the three weeks prior to the scheduled mid-term break. During this

period, the weekly contact time was further reduced, with the school operating three days per week on a temporary basis.

This overall reduction in instructional time represents a change from the arrangements observed during the preliminary assessment and remains a core consideration in evaluating the provision under the requirements of Section 14 registration.

Section 5 The Learning Environment

The school is located in a bright, purpose-adapted building within the Monaghan Wetlands, a striking natural setting that significantly enhances the learning environment. The surrounding landscape is rich in woodland, water pathways, and open natural space that aligns strongly with the Waldorf philosophy and offers students regular opportunities for outdoor exploration and nature-based learning. The interior of the school benefits from abundant natural light, with classrooms resourced using natural materials that contribute to a calm atmosphere.

A spacious and dedicated classroom was in use during the observed session. The learning area is thoughtfully arranged to support hands-on, practical, and movement-based activities, such as the use of a numbered line for a numeracy game. Since the previous assessment, the classroom has undergone purposeful upgrades, including the addition of more visually appealing displays and improved organisation of the learning materials. The walls now feature a variety of student work and thematic displays that support literacy, numeracy, and seasonal learning, further strengthening the educational environment.

The classroom and wider learning space are well suited to the current single-class provision while also offering the flexibility to accommodate a growing cohort. The building is modern and well designed, with additional scope for future class groups as the school expands. Pupils access the outdoor learning environment throughout the day, and the use of the natural landscape remains an embedded part of school practice, with further potential for extended outdoor play and learning.

All necessary health and safety, fire safety, and insurance documentation has been confirmed as in place and up to date through the school's Annual R2 Update.

Section 6 The Educational Activities

6.1. General information

Monaghan Waldorf School provides a curriculum aligned with the developmental stages of primary-level pupils, integrating academic, practical, and artistic activities to support intellectual, emotional, and physical growth. Consistent with Waldorf/Steiner educational philosophy, the programme places strong emphasis on creativity, imagination, and hands-on learning, nurturing curiosity and a love of learning. Core academic subjects such as literacy, numeracy, and languages are delivered through experiential methods including storytelling, rhythmic movement, artistic expression, and imitation. These areas are complemented by Waldorf-specific practices such as eurythmy, handwork, nature-based learning, and

the celebration of seasonal festivals, all of which cultivate environmental awareness and community engagement.

The curriculum aims to foster holistic development through a teacher-led approach that balances structured learning with responsiveness to individual needs. Aligned with Rudolf Steiner's educational principles, it integrates academic content with artistic and practical skills to support creativity, critical thinking, and personal responsibility. Regular nature studies, including gardening and nature walks, encourage environmental stewardship and connection with the natural world. Learning is organised around extended "Main Lesson" blocks, in which a single subject is explored in depth over several weeks, supported by ongoing lessons in music, art, handwork, movement, and outdoor education. This structure contributes to a primary education and aligns with the school's mission to foster courage, open-mindedness, and personal responsibility.

The curriculum follows the Waldorf pedagogy, integrating academic, artistic, and practical learning in purposeful and developmentally informed ways. The recent move to a single-class model has resulted in a restructuring of the daily timetable since the preliminary visit, though the core elements remain unchanged: main lessons, artistic blocks, handwork, outdoor time, and experiential activities that support foundational skill development. Lessons emphasise imitation, rhythm, purposeful play, and practical engagement.

During the second assessment visit, the assessors observed a main lesson that included a range of literacy and numeracy experiences, such as alliteration activities, a hop-and-skip numeracy game on the numbered line, story-based learning, and pre-writing exercises informed by strategies recommended by the occupational therapist. Pupils were fully engaged throughout the session, demonstrating connection to their learning and clear evidence that previous learning was being incrementally built upon across tasks and activities.

Rhythm and structure are key features of the Waldorf pedagogy; these were clearly evident in the teaching and learning observed. The predictable flow of the session, integration of movement, and balance between artistic and academic components contributed to a calm and purposeful learning environment.

6.2. Language and literacy skills

As reported during the Preliminary Assessment, the development of language and literacy skills at Monaghan Waldorf School is rooted in creative, immersive pedagogical methods that support linguistic expression, imagination, and foundational literacy growth. Daily storytelling plays a central role in this approach, promoting vocabulary development, strengthening listening skills, and fostering a sustained love of language. This storytelling-based methodology is identified as a core foundation for early literacy. Writing is introduced through artistic and sensory-rich activities that begin in the early stages of the school cycle. Form-drawing activities gradually evolve into the formation of letters, supporting pupils in making meaningful connections between sounds and symbols within the context of the lesson. Reading emerges naturally from this process, with students creating their own Main Lesson books. These personalised copybooks, used in place of standardised textbooks, reinforce learning through creativity,

comprehension, and active engagement with content. Examples of this was observed by the assessors at the review assessment visit.

Oral language development is further supported through recitation, songs, storytelling, group discussions, and creative expression. Additionally, students engage with *Am Scéaláochta* during timetabled sessions providing structured exposure to Irish oral language storytelling traditions.

During the assessment visit, literacy learning was observed through activities such as alliteration exercises, story-based comprehension, and pre-writing work informed by strategies recommended by the occupational therapist. These tasks were developmentally appropriate, purposeful, and well aligned with the Waldorf model's emphasis on rhythm, structure, and immersion. Pupils were fully engaged, and the activities demonstrated a clear progression of skills built incrementally over time.

In line with a previous recommendation, there remains scope for the school to further develop formal assessment tools to track and monitor literacy progression in a more systematic manner.

6.3. Numeracy

As reported during the Preliminary Assessment, numeracy at Monaghan Waldorf School is taught through experiential, rhythmic, and developmentally informed methods designed to foster an appreciation of mathematical concepts and their real-life applications. In the early years, arithmetic is introduced through kinaesthetic and movement-based activities such as clapping, stepping, and rhythm games that help pupils internalise number patterns and operations. This approach makes abstract concepts tangible, engaging, and accessible for young learners. As pupils progress, geometric concepts are explored through artistic exercises, including form drawing and geometric illustration, highlighting mathematical patterns and symmetry. Practical activities such as measuring during cooking, gardening, and handwork further demonstrate the relevance of numeracy in everyday life. This approach develops logical thinking, problem-solving skills, and confidence in alignment with the Waldorf educational philosophy.

Numeracy continues to be integrated into rhythmic, kinaesthetic activities and practical tasks across the school day. During the assessment visit, the assessors observed a numeracy element within the Main Lesson that included an alliteration-based numeracy game and a physical "hop-skip" activity on a numbered line. Pupils also engaged in a movement sequence using a 1–12 numbered line to explore numerical order and pattern.

The numeracy activities observed were purposeful and developmentally appropriate. Assessors noted clear and intentional teaching that built directly on pupils' prior knowledge, with each activity demonstrating continuity from earlier learning experiences. Pupils were confident in participating, readily drawing on what they already understood to extend their skills during the session. This incremental approach supported both conceptual understanding and mathematical fluency.

In keeping with previous recommendations, there remains scope for the school to further develop formal assessment tools for tracking and reporting numeracy progression in a more systematic and measurable way.

6.4. Irish

As reported during the Preliminary Assessment, the Irish language programme at Monaghan Waldorf School introduces pupils to Gaeilge through an oral, cultural, and story-centred approach that fosters early confidence and appreciation for Irish heritage. Children engage with Irish through songs, poems, rhymes, and simple conversational phrases, helping them develop a natural ear for the language in a supportive and enjoyable context. Irish myths, legends, and traditional stories are incorporated into storytelling sessions, enriching language learning with cultural depth and strengthening pupils' connection to Ireland's heritage. The school's current provision continues to reflect this oral and cultural methodology. Gaeilge is integrated into daily rhythms through songs, stories, and spoken phrases, with more structured engagement taking place during the scheduled Am Scéaláochta sessions. Since the initial preliminary visit, the school has strengthened the provision for Irish education with the above mentioned regular timetabled supports for the development of listening and oral-language skills. The programme aligns with the school's holistic philosophy by nurturing linguistic curiosity, cultural awareness, and a sense of identity through narrative and creative expression.

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

As reported at the time of the Preliminary Assessment, the curriculum at Monaghan Waldorf School encompasses a diverse range of subjects designed to nurture creativity, physical development, and practical skills. Artistic activities form a core part of daily learning and include painting, drawing, and modelling with natural materials, all of which enhance creativity, imagination, and fine motor development. Music and movement remain central features of the curriculum, with pupils engaging in singing, simple instrumental work, and eurythmy a Waldorf specific expressive movement art that promotes coordination, rhythm, and music.

Handwork continues to play a significant role, with activities such as knitting, sewing, and introductory woodworking fostering patience, dexterity, and an appreciation for craftsmanship. These sessions are facilitated by staff experienced in Waldorf inspired handwork and practical arts, ensuring continuity with the school's educational approach.

Outdoor education remains an important aspect of the provision, with pupils regularly engaging in gardening, nature observation, and outdoor play within the school's natural wetland setting. These activities promote environmental awareness, physical development, and an appreciation for the natural world. However, the school reports that the previously timetabled forest school sessions facilitated by a

certified forest-school instructor, which took place onsite on Fridays, are no longer part of the current provision.

Social and personal education is embedded throughout daily routines and interactions and is guided by the school's Code of Behaviour. Pastoral support continues to be provided on an as needed basis. The school also maintains a strong commitment to cultural and community learning through the celebration of seasonal festivals, which form an important part of the rhythm of the school year.

In line with changes to staffing and timetabling, the school confirms that Spanish lessons are no longer delivered as part of the current curriculum.

Overall, the curriculum continues to place strong emphasis on the arts, handwork, movement, and nature-based learning in alignment with the holistic aims of Waldorf education.

6.6. Special educational needs

The school's low pupil-to-adult ratio enables a high level of individual attention and close observation of pupils' learning needs. The school reported that a number of parents of children with additional needs have expressed interest in the Waldorf model. In line with its enrolment policy, the school stated that it only agrees to enrolment where it is confident that it can safely support a child's needs and provide an appropriate level of care and supervision. The current small class size supports this approach by allowing staff to respond to pupils' emerging needs in a flexible and developmentally informed manner. The principal explained to the assessors that differentiation is planned informally each day, based on ongoing observation of pupil readiness, learning pace, and individual strengths. This practice was evident during the assessment, where tasks were adapted fluidly to support varying abilities, and pupils were offered different levels of challenge according to their prior knowledge and developmental stage.

Additional inclusive practices were also noted. The occupational therapist volunteer referenced the use of strategic seating arrangements to support focus, engagement, and regulation for individual pupils. Sensory supports and a designated quiet/sensory space were available in an adjoining room to provide pupils with opportunities for regulation when needed.

Section 7 The Voice Of The Child

Pupil engagement and wellbeing are central to the Waldorf philosophy, and this was reflected in the learning environment observed during the assessment. During the main lesson, the assessors noted that pupils were happy, settled, and actively engaged in their learning. The classroom atmosphere was warm, calm, and purposeful, with pupils demonstrating confidence and ease in participating in the activities offered.

Pupil's voice is fostered through the participatory and rhythmic nature of daily lessons, including group recitation, singing, movement activities, and opportunities for pupils to contribute ideas within the flow of the lesson. These practices support self-expression, cooperation, and a sense of belonging within the class community.

The school's regular seasonal festivals and community events also provide informal yet meaningful avenues for children to express themselves and take part in shared celebrations. These occasions contribute positively to pupils' wellbeing and sense of connection, and the school is encouraged to consider how it might document these aspects of its provision to better reflect the breadth of children's experiences over the school year.

During the assessment, the assessors spoke with pupils in the classroom, they confidently shared their craft work and Christmas decorations, displayed proudly on the classroom tree. The observed enthusiasm and sense of ownership over their creations further illustrated the positive climate evident for wellbeing and engagement within the school.

Section 8 Assessment And Record Keeping

This area was a key focus of the recommendations made in the Preliminary Assessment. The school's R2 Annual Update form indicates that its mechanisms for recording and monitoring pupil progress remain "as per previous R2 submission," signalling continued reliance on observational practices centred on holistic development.

During this review, assessors noted that some progress had been made since the previous recommendations. In particular, the school had documented a clearer outline of its assessment framework and provided examples of reporting tools, including templates and descriptions of how the Main Lesson books are used to record pupil work and provide teacher feedback. These developments represent positive initial steps towards greater structure in monitoring core skills.

The assessors specifically queried the development of more systematic approaches to assessing and reporting progress in literacy and numeracy. While the school has introduced some informal reporting practices to support communication with parents, it is recommended that a more formal termly update be developed to ensure consistent and comprehensive reporting for all pupils.

At present, the school continues to rely primarily on teacher observations, Main Lesson books, and informal parent-teacher discussions to share information about pupil progress. During the review discussion, the principal confirmed that the school's overall assessment and reporting practices remain largely unchanged since the previous assessment. Standardised report templates have not yet been implemented, and no specific training in Waldorf-aligned assessment methods has been undertaken to date.

The assessors also noted the strong relationships between staff and families. Daily informal exchanges contribute significantly to the school's communication practices. This was evident during the visit when a parent arrived for collection and staff engaged in a warm, natural discussion about the child's day and recent learning experiences. While these interactions demonstrate a positive and trusting partnership with parents, they do not replace the need for a more formalised and documented assessment and reporting system.

Section 9 Other Relevant Information

The school operates within a community ethos, with evident parental involvement. The detailed annual calendar demonstrates its commitment to building a meaningful school year that connects learning with nature and community as per Waldorf philosophy.

All safeguarding and compliance documents, including the Tusla-approved Child Safeguarding Statement, insurance, and fire safety certificates, are confirmed to be in place and up to date.

Section 10 Evaluation Of The Education Provision And Recommendations

This review finds that Monaghan Waldorf School continues to provide a caring and holistic learning environment rooted firmly in Waldorf principles. A clear Waldorf rhythm and a child-centred ethos were evident throughout the review visit. Pupils observed in the classroom were engaged, settled, and content in their learning. The school remains compliant in its safeguarding procedures and required operational documentation. The learning environment, its atmosphere, resourcing, and attention to pupil interests continues to be a notable strength and provides a positive foundation for the provision.

Progress has been made in response to the recommendations outlined in the Preliminary Assessment, particularly in the development of assessment frameworks and initial reporting templates. However, further work is required to embed these systems consistently across core skill areas.

An aspect of change relates to the reduced instructional time due to the move to a shorter school day and a four-day week. The school's intention to re-appoint a full-time teacher is positive and will be critical in supporting a return to allocation of teaching time and ensuring stability and continuity of educational provision. This would also support the long-term sustainability and proposed expansion of the provision.

Recommendations for the Provision

To ensure the school continues to meet the requirements for a certain minimum education, the following recommendations are advised:

- Prioritise a review of instructional time with a view to increasing the length of both the school day and the school week.
- Increase staffing by securing suitable teaching personnel, as intended individuals with an understanding of Waldorf philosophy is preferable, to support continuity of provision and planned enrolment growth.
- Continue to strengthen the assessment framework to systematically track progression in core skills, particularly literacy and numeracy.
- Develop and implement standardised termly reporting templates to ensure all parents receive consistent, formalised updates on their child's progress in key learning areas.

- Develop a structured programme of staff training in assessment and reporting practices appropriate to both Waldorf pedagogy and the regulatory context.

Recommendation for Registration

It is recommended that children in receipt of an education at the Monaghan Waldorf School should be retained and registered.

It is recommended that a review the provision with specific reference to the recommendations as outlined above, is conducted at the beginning of the next academic year in September 2026.

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 11 Discussion Of Finding Of Report With Principal

The assessors met with the principal at the conclusion of the visit and discussed the findings in relation to each of the areas outlined in this report. It was indicated at the time of the assessment that the overall report would be positive and would affirm the good practice observed during the visit. The assessors also noted that, in line with the Preliminary Assessment, the report would include recommendations as required, including recommendations that would highlight the need for continued development of the actions previously identified.

Section 12 Outcome

Outcome Of Tusla Alternative Education Assessment And Registration Service Panel Regarding Requirements For Section 14 Registration Of Children Attending The School

The assessment report was brought to Tusla Registration Panel for a decision regarding registration. The Registration Panel decided that children attending the Monaghan Waldorf 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