

Section 14 Education (Welfare) Act, 2000

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

**Independent School
Review Assessment Report**



Name of School

Saol Christian School Dundalk

Address

First Floor,
Island Church Dundalk,
Long Walk,
Dundalk,
Co. Louth, A91 Y433

Name of Principal/Director

Sharon Reilly

Name of Assessor/s

Lisa Duffy

Date of Assessment

4th June 2026

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Section 1 Background Information

1.1. School Hours

Opening Time:	08:30		
Closing time:	16:00		
Main breaks during the day:	10:15	to	10:30
	12:00	to	12:45

Is school in operation for more than five years?

No

If no, please give date on which school commenced operation

04/09/2023

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

(Normally interview should take place with the principal)

Sharon Reilly

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 administrator;
- An interview with the administrator;
- Classroom visits;
- Observation of a sample of learning tasks completed by the pupils;
- Observation of the educational materials in use;

- The school website: www.saolchristianschool.com;
- www.christian.education/ace.

Section 2 General Information And School Context

Saol Christian School, Dundalk is a co-educational, fee-paying school, which caters for pupils from the local and wider Christian community. It is located in the Longwalk area of Dundalk, Co Louth and is situated on the first floor of Island Church. It has been operational since September 2023 and during this time the school has grown steadily. There are currently 19 pupils attending the school. For the purposes of registration there are 14 pupils age 6 and over enrolled in the school. A sister school is located in Drogheda and is also managed by the administrator, Sharon Reilly.

The ethos of the school is based on Christian principles and parents/guardians of pupils applying for a place in the school are expected to support this ethos. Admission, however, is not dependent on religious affiliation and pupils of all faiths and none are welcome in the school, this is clearly stated in the school's Admissions Policy - *"Though parents/guardians are not required to affirm our Statement of Faith, the parents/guardians at Saol Christian School must have a willingness to have their child exposed to the clear teaching of the school's Statement of Faith within the school curriculum"*.

Currently, there is no appointed Board of Management governing the school. The school is registered as a company, with Sharon Reilly named as the company's director. She assumes responsibility for the governance of the school.

The Mission Statement, which is available on the school website www.saolchristianschool.com, states "It is our mission to partner with parents to prepare and develop the whole student: mind, body and spirit, through academic training, ministry and worship."

The school maintains regular communication with parents via a WhatsApp group and there are plans to re-introduce sending a regular newsletter to the school community to keep them updated on school life. The school's website is also used to share information. The school welcomes the support of parents and the administrator reported that positive home-school relationships have been forged. While the parents' association has disbanded, it is reported that parents give willingly of their time to support school initiatives.

Section 3 The Principal And Staff

The administrator for Saol Christian School Dundalk, and Saol Christian School Drogheda is based in Dundalk. She acts as a supervisor for pupils in the senior classroom. A second supervisor works with pupils at kindergarten level. One volunteer assists in the delivery of the physical education (PE) curriculum.

The principal's declaration on the R2 Annual Update Form confirms that all staff have been Garda vetted. Formal staff meetings, involving staff from both Saol Christian School Dundalk, and Saol Christian School Drogheda take place twice per year. Informal staff meetings take place almost daily. Supervisors undertake a professional teachers' course every four years.

Section 4 Time Devoted To Education

Pupils are welcomed into the school from 08:30 daily. Opening exercises start at 08:45 and Packets of Accelerated Christian Education (PACE) work begins at 09:00. Pupils receive a morning break from 10:15 until 10:30 and a lunch break from 12:00 until 12:45. They also receive mini stretch breaks throughout the day. Junior and senior infant pupils are dismissed at 14:30, and primary and secondary pupils are dismissed at 15:00 and 16:00 respectively. The administrator reported that attendance is very good, and a record of attendance is maintained in the school.

A copy of the school's calendar for the current academic year, as well as the timetable for the Primary Learning Centre, was submitted with the R2 Annual Update Form. The current school year runs from 1st September 2025 to 26th June 2026. The school will be operational for 168 days during the current academic year.

Section 5 The Learning Environment

The school is located above Island Church in the Long Walk area of Dundalk. It consists of two classrooms and a large common area which is used as a lunchroom and play area. One classroom

is attractively set up as an infant classroom, while the other is equipped with individual, personal workstations or “offices” which are assigned to pupils for completing PACE work. These offices are designed to give pupils privacy and minimise distractions, so that pupils can focus on reaching their goals. Central scoring and testing areas are available, where children evaluate themselves. Classrooms are light filled, comfortable and colourful.

The school is committed to integrating information technology (IT) into all areas of learning and all pupils from level two upwards have been allocated a Chromebook to support them in their studies. A gated outdoor playing area is available within the church grounds. The main church is used by the pupils for weekly chapel time. Pupils benefit from being taught in classrooms with a favourable pupil teacher ratio.

Section 6 The Educational Activities

6.1. General information

The international Accelerated Christian Education (ACE) curriculum is used to deliver the curriculum to primary and post primary students. Younger children are also catered for through the kindergarten programme.

The ACE curriculum is based on Biblical principles and focuses on the spiritual and moral development of the child, as well as their academic achievement. Godly character-building lessons are integrated into all learning areas.

The Vision Statement states - *It is our vision to see all of our students succeed academically within the ACE system while developing strong Godly character so that as they walk out the path that their Heavenly Father has set before them it will bring glory to His name.*

Core subjects in the ACE curriculum are English, Mathematics, Word Building, Science, Social Studies, and Literature and Creative Writing. Academic electives are also available to pupils. Each subject consists of twelve PACEs per level. Students typically complete a minimum of 72 PACEs per academic year. E-PACEs (electronic packets ACE) are used to deliver some courses, while traditional PACE booklets are used for others.

Pupils can achieve The General Certificate or The Advanced Certificate during their time in second level at the school. The General Certificate, which serves as a transition between the general and advanced levels is identified as equivalent to O level/GCSE standard. The Intermediate Certificate is identified as on par with “A” level standard.

6.2. Language and literacy skills

Pupil’s oral language, reading and writing skills are developed incrementally using carefully graded PACEs, and language and literacy development is integrated throughout all areas of learning. Early Language and literacy skills are developed in the junior classroom through the ABC programme. The multi-sensory, phonics-based approach brings children up to a level which enables them to engage independently with PACE work. Currently only three children are enrolled in this classroom, and pupils benefit from individualised attention. Once pupils have mastered basic phonics skills, reading, oral language and spelling skills are developed through engagement with the Word Building PACE. Pupils continue to learn phonetic rules and expand their vocabulary as they progress through their PACE work. Throughout the curriculum, the introduction of new vocabulary is controlled so that no new word is used without the pupil first learning its meaning and pronunciation. These words are then repeated in context to ensure mastery. Pupils make regular oral presentations to their peers. Oral report topics, which pupils can choose from, are on display in the classroom.

Pupils read aloud daily for the supervisors until they reach level two. Prescribed texts are studied in literature, and the study of poetry is included in the provision. Undertaking written comprehension tasks, drafting and editing, writing across the genres and learning about parts of speech help pupils develop their writing skills. Pupils are exposed to cursive writing from approximately age 7. The Wordbuilder, Readmaster and Typemaster apps are used to support and enhance the provision.

6.3. Numeracy

As per the previous assessment report - the numeracy programme is structured and highly individualised, with all 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. Pupils must master one concept before moving on to the next. Mathematical skills are developed through daily activities and practice.

Pupils up to level six use the interactive Math Builder programme to supplement their PACE work and to reinforce and consolidate basic mathematical concepts. Playing chess is popular amongst the pupils.

6.4. Irish

Pupils in the primary school study Irish using the Duolingo app while secondary school pupils study Irish using the Rosetta Stone app. The administrator is currently in the process of developing PACEs in Irish for secondary school pupils and the aim is that these will replace the Rosetta Stone app for this cohort of students.

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

Languages: The option of learning a foreign language, using the Rosetta Stone app as the main resource, is given to pupils at second level.

IT: The use of IT is integrated across all areas of learning and most of the children's course work is now completed on ePACES. All pupils from level two upwards have their own personal Chromebook which is provided by the school. Pupils are initially taught how to use the computer. Coding is taught to pupils from age 8 upwards.

Art: During the first term of the current academic year, pupils were given the opportunity to develop their individual creativity during weekly art classes.

Religious Education: Saol Christian School is a Christian school, and religious education is integrated into all learning areas. The school's Statement of Faith is available for viewing on www.saolchristianschool.com. The school day begins with opening exercises. During this time, children read a passage from scripture, pray for special intentions, sing, and celebrate achievements and milestones. Chapel time is timetabled weekly, during which the whole school gathers for weekly worship. Devotions classes are timetabled and pupils study and discuss one character trait of Jesus per month. Younger pupils listen to Bible stories while older pupils engage in Bible reading.

Physical Education (PE): PE is taught once per week by an external volunteer teacher. Skills, such as throwing, catching or shooting, are developed through games and activities. An annual Sports Day is arranged for pupils in both schools.

Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM): Science is taught through PACE work. Pupils were afforded the opportunity to engage in STEM activities during the second term. Resources from www.kiwico.com are used to support the STEM provision.

Social Studies: The learning area of social studies covers history, geography, civics, and economics from a traditional, Biblical worldview. Pupils learn basic geography and history before progressing on to World Geography, World History, Civics, and Economics.

Electives: A variety of electives are on offer to second level pupils which supplement the core curriculum. Pupils who will begin studying for the General Certificate in September will have the option of studying electives.

6.6. Special educational needs

The favourable pupil teacher ratio, combined with the individual nature of the ACE curriculum means that the majority of children can access the curriculum within the classroom setting with the resources available in the school.

It is stated in the Admissions Policy that *Saol Christian School is a small private school with limited resources compared to the public schools and other larger private schools. Public schools receive*

additional funding for students with special needs and hire specialised staff to serve their unique needs. Saol Christian School does admit students with special needs when we believe that we can truly serve and educate them. The needs of the child should always be prioritised.

Each child's application for enrolment is looked at on a case-by-case basis, and the school considers whether it can reasonably provide for the pupil's needs having regard to available resources and the obligation to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all pupils. Decisions are informed by professional reports and discussions with parents/guardians.

Section 7 The Voice Of The Child

The assessor visited classrooms on the day of the assessment and interacted with pupils during the visit. Pupils discussed their PACE work and how the ACE curriculum is implemented in the school. Pupils also explained how they used their flags to ask for help and showed a clear understanding of routines and structures associated with the ACE curriculum.

Pupils discussed how they earn stickers and privileges, including how the merit shop works. One pupil discussed how and why she provides feedback to ACE through a computer portal.

Section 8 Assessment And Record Keeping

Prior to commencing at the school, a diagnostic test is administered to determine a child's optimal starting point in the ACE curriculum. They are then prescribed a tailored level for each subject according to their ability level. Pupils set daily personal learning goals, and these are checked by the supervisor daily. Ongoing discussions take place around setting and achieving goals to ensure that they are appropriate and achievable. Pupils complete several check-ups as they work through their PACEs. These check-ups are informal quizzes which are designed to highlight any area which the child is finding challenging. The child can then review the concept before proceeding to the next section. Pupils take the Self-Test as a practice for the PACE test and finally they take the mastery-based PACE test. The results of all assessments are recorded, retained and shared with parents

through digital progress reports which can be viewed by parents. The mark required to pass each test is high, and revision is required if the pupil does not reach the required level.

Secondary school students who are studying for ICCE academic qualifications are assessed through continuous assessment, with a minimum score of 80% required for progression. Assessments are moderated both internally and externally by ICCE.

Optional, formal parent-teacher meetings are held twice per year.

Section 9 Other Relevant Information

As indicated on the R2 Annual Update Form, all staff members have been Garda vetted and have been trained in the implementation of the school's Child Safeguarding Statement. All staff have been trained in Children First Guidelines. There is an appointed Designated Liaison Person (DLP), and Deputy Designated Liaison Person (DDL), and details are included in the Child Safeguarding Statement, which is prominently displayed. The Child Safeguarding Statement has been confirmed compliant by the Tusla Child Safeguarding Statement Compliance Unit.

School policies are available for viewing on www.saolchristianschool.com. The school's Admissions Policy and the steps to enrol children in the school are clearly outlined on this website.

Section 10 Evaluation Of The Education Provision And Recommendations

In my opinion, pupils attending Saol Christian School, Dundalk are in receipt of an education, intellectual, physical, moral, and social that meets requirements for Section 14 Registration for pupils attending the school.

The reasons I have formed this opinion of the education provision in the school are as follows:

- The implementation of the structured ACE curriculum;

- The school's commitment to providing every pupil with their own Chromebook and the integration of IT into all areas of learning;
- The individualised attention given to younger pupils to ensure that strong foundations in early literacy and numeracy skills are laid;
- Learning is assessed regularly to ensure that mastery is achieved prior to the introduction of new concepts;
- Record keeping is a strength in the school;
- The development of policies to aid the smooth running of the school;
- The favourable pupil teacher ratio;
- Pupils learn to take responsibility for their own learning as they engage in regular goal setting activities, cross off completed tasks and set their own learning pace.

Recommendations regarding provision:

- Consideration should be given to the establishment of a Board of Management to oversee the governance of the school;
- Review and ensure all staff are fully trained in the implementation of the Child Safeguarding Statement and all related procedures for child protection and welfare reporting.

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. After consideration is given to information provided on the feedback form, the final report is brought to the AEARS Registration Panel for a decision regarding registration of children in receipt of the education at the Independent School.

Section 11 Discussion Of Finding Of Report With Principal

The finding of the report was discussed with the administrator, Ms Sharon Reilly, at the conclusion of the visit on the 04 June 2026. We discussed the procedures that would follow. It was stated that the recommendation would be to register and retain the pupils of Saol Christian School on the register. The final decision regarding registration will be made by Tusla, Child and Family Agency.

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 Saol Christian School Dundalk 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