

Section 14 Education (Welfare) Act, 2000

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

**Independent School
Review Assessment Report**



Name of School

Sharavogue Junior School

Address

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Telephone

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Name of Principal/Director

Helen Connolly

Name of Assessor/s

Paula Callaghan

Date of Assessment

8th November 2022

Date of Final Report

15th June 2023

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	8
6.5.	Other areas of learning	8
6.6.	Special educational needs	9
Section 7	Assessment And Record Keeping	10
Section 8	Other Relevant Information	10
Section 9	Evaluation Of The Education Provision And Recommendations	11
Section 10	Discussion Of Finding Of Report With Principal	11
Section 11	Outcome	12

Section 1 Background Information

1.1. School Hours

Opening Time:	09:00		
Closing time:	14:30		
Main breaks during the day:	10:30 10:30	to	11:00/ 10:45 3 rd to 6 th classes
	12:00	to	13:00/ 12.30 3 rd to 6 th Classes

Is school in operation for more than five years?

Yes

If no, please give date on which school commenced operation

00/00/0000

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

(Normally interview should take place with the principal)

Ms Helen Connolly

1.3. Sources of evidence on which report is based

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

- Information furnished in form R2 completed by the principal
- An interview with the principal
- Classroom visits
- Observation of a sample of learning tasks completed by the pupils
- Observation of the educational materials in use.
- Extensive notes provided by the principal in advance of the assessment.

Section 2 General Information and School Context

Sharavogue Junior School is a privately owned, co-educational, fee-paying primary school. It is non-denominational, with a strong ethos of respect for all religious denominations, where children of all religions or none are welcomed. On campus with Sharavogue Junior School there is a creche and a pre-school. Many of the pupils attending the school began as infants in the creche, and similarly, many avail of the after-school care provided.

The school prides itself on its family atmosphere, where families are fully supported, and pupils can be looked after from infancy to preschool, through to primary school, with the option of before and after day care where required. All pupils are provided with a cooked meal each day and snacks.

Sharavogue Junior School has achieved four Green Flags. Pupils are currently working towards their fifth green flag which is based on the theme of biodiversity.

The school is located in a large Victorian house, formerly a family home, and was founded in 1983. Since its establishment the campus and facilities have expanded and developed. Pupil enrolment has increased over the past 3 years. Plans to expand vertically by retaining second class pupils as they progressed into third class and beyond have been successful. Currently there are sixty-one pupils enrolled in the school in classes from Junior Infants to 6th Class, of whom for the purposes of this review assessment forty-five pupils are aged 6 years or over.

Section 3 The Principal and Staff

Staff at the school consists of a teaching principal, six class teachers, and a learning support teacher. The Learning Support teacher provides additional learning support for pupils experiencing difficulties, and for those with special educational needs. Part time teaching staff include a teacher for French, and a teacher from Southside Sports who teaches weekly multi-sports lessons. Ancillary staff comprises of a school secretary and chefs.

Ongoing professional development is key to growth and development at Sharavogue, and each teacher is encouraged to share their own strengths and new ideas with the team. A very high level of information sharing takes place. The school has a whole school approach to planning, preparation, and assessment. Monthly planning meetings are held to develop planning, policies, and assessments, and to ensure everyone is kept fully informed, and that each pupil is appropriately supported. Daily checks are communicated between staff, and with parents as required. The principal explained that, because of low pupil teacher ratio, and daily communication with parents, gaps are easily identified, communicated in a timely manner, and interventions put in place.

The school receives the active support of its parent body. Parents are regularly included in school events, such as a St Patrick's Day school parade, Science week, and the annual Sports Day. There is an active student council, who meet regularly, and whose members represent their individual classes, and advocate for class and whole school improvements.

Section 4 Time Devoted to Education

Time devoted to education is very carefully set out, in line with Department of Education (DE) requirements. The school operates a five-day week, Monday to Friday, over approximately one hundred and eighty school days. Formal education commences at 09.00 and finishes at 14.30. Pupils are accepted on campus from 08.00, and after school care is provided for those who choose it. There is a fifteen-minute morning break, and a thirty-minute lunch break for pupils from third classes up. Younger pupils break for a thirty-minute morning break, and lunch and play time from 12.30 until 13.30, in line with DE requirements for infant classes. A lunch, which is prepared and cooked on the premises, is provided to all pupils.

Section 5 The Learning Environment

The ethos of Sharavogue Junior School is to foster a vibrant and solid school community that works collaboratively with pupils, teachers, and parents, to ensure best outcomes for its pupils. A happy, welcoming, family atmosphere is prioritised and prevails. The school is located within private grounds and surrounded by mature trees and plants, with well-equipped playgrounds, and flower and vegetable gardens. The original school building is a large Victorian house over three floors. Classrooms are bright and sunny. Each is well equipped with Montessori materials and an eclectic range of other educational resources. Each classroom has its own whiteboard and class library. Hallways are well maintained, and are decorated with pupils' writing, artwork and themed projects.

The school operates a low pupil-teacher ratio and values their small classes relative to the national average. Staff are confident that this allows for quality individual attention, ensuring each child can learn comfortably at their own pace. The school provides wrap around care and education from infancy, through preschool and full primary education, for those who choose it. During breaks pupils play outside in one of the many age appropriate, well equipped, and supervised play areas.

Section 6 The Educational Activities

6.1. General information

Planning, learning, and learning activities are informed by the national Primary School Curriculum across all of the subject areas and strands. The curriculum is guided and implemented using approved textbooks and extended with library books and concrete materials. In the senior classes pupils use laptops and iPads for research, implemented through a predominantly Montessori approach and active learning methodologies. Developments within the curriculum since its inception in 1999 are welcomed, reflected upon, and implemented. Emphasis is placed on provision of a fully integrated and individualised active educational experience for pupils. This integrated approach prevails across all areas of learning. Nothing is taught in isolation, and the pupils are facilitated to identify the links and the interconnectedness of their learning using collaborative and active methodologies. Nature, the environment, and caring for each other and others form an important part of the learning experience for pupils at Sharavogue Junior School.

The learning environment is welcoming and has been carefully created to support all the developmental and pedagogical needs of the pupils. All classrooms are equipped to enable the provision of full and stimulating learning experiences for the pupils. A full range of learning aids, textbooks, and class libraries aid the implementation of a child-centred Primary School Curriculum. Outdoor spaces are designed to provide play and access to nature and the environment. School facilities are supplemented with trips to the local library, The Lexicon, and through links with other local amenities. Pupils access weekly swimming at Loughlinstown pool, and enjoy the sports pitches at St Joseph of Cluny Secondary School. An annual Christmas performance is staged at St Joseph of Cluny.

The principal ensures that close links have been developed with facilities that can enhance learning and life experiences for the pupils. She and the staff are united in their view that children progress best when they feel motivated and are active agents in their own learning. Considerable emphasis is placed on ensuring that every pupil has as many opportunities as possible, and that each gains the confidence to achieve their personal best, and to feel valued.

6.2. Language and literacy skills

Language and Literacy is guided by the national Primary School Curriculum, English syllabus, across all of the strands and strand units. The development of language and literacy skills is encouraged in an imaginative and creative way, enhanced through competitions, projects, and prepared presentations. The school aim is to build on prior knowledge to enhance language skills, and for pupils to recognise the diverse experiences and language styles of their peers. Think pair share, group discussions and debate are strategies that are used to encourage the children to share their own life experiences and enable them to reflect on their learning. Teaching methodologies ensure linkage with all other areas of learning based on Montessori philosophy and approaches. Teachers ensure that textbooks and other teaching and learning aids are always used to accommodate the individual needs of each child.

Core areas addressed in this curricular area include reading, grammar, oral language, written language and effective communication. Work in all areas is supported using appropriate textbooks and accessing a wide range of reading material.

The curriculum and learning environment created in the school therefore supports pupils in learning to read and to write, to speak with confidence, and to participate in dramas, debates, and presentations of their work to classmates, parents, and teachers. Infant classes begin by using the Songbirds Reading Programme and Jolly Phonics series. They learn to write and to practise skills using All Write Now (Folens) and Sounds in Action (Folens) workbooks. In 1st to 6th Classes the Rainbow English Programme (C.J. Fallon) is utilised. The teachers value this programme because of its structure, and content. They explained that it supports language, reading, research, and critical thinking. Pupils write across the genres. Their work was displayed in classrooms and on corridors. All classrooms have their own libraries which contain their favourite books. The senior classes have an appointed librarian, who recommends books and helps to promote a love of reading for pleasure and information. Regular visits to The Lexicon Library take place.

The DES continuum of support is in place in all classrooms. A Learning Support Teacher provides additional language and literacy support when it is deemed necessary. The school is acutely aware of the impacts of Covid on education in general, and specifically on language and literacy, especially among pupils in first and second class, and for those pupils who speak a language other than English in the home. Guided support is provided as required.

6.3. Numeracy

The numeracy programme implements all of the strands and strand units of The Primary School Curriculum, Mathematics syllabus, and whole school planning underpins the key areas of the maths curriculum. Classes are using Planet Maths (Folens) to guide and to monitor progress.

Each Maths lesson begins with recap and a think, pair, share exercise. The KWL strategy (what we know, what we want to know, and what we learned) is used during every numeracy lesson, and learning concentrates on building confidence in Maths by addressing the following components:

- Development and the correct use of mathematical language
- Real-life problem solving
- Oral and mental maths
- Estimation
- Written computation
- Integration with other subjects

Learning outcomes are assessed at the end of each lesson, and at end of week tests on Fridays.

6.4. Irish

All pupils learn Irish, and Irish language and culture is promoted informally and during Irish lessons. The textbook *Seo Leat* (C.J. Fallon) is aligned with the New Language Programme and is used as a basis for Irish receptive and expressive language, conversation, and reading lessons. The use of this programme, with its internet visual and audio supports, gives a structured approach to lessons.

In junior classes, the emphasis is on oral language development, and Irish songs and rhymes. In the senior classes oral language development is integrated with reading and writing. As pupils progress, all of the elements of The Primary Curriculum Irish Language syllabus are combined and learned simultaneously. Poetry, rhymes, and music are used to practise and consolidate taught language skills. Colourful display boards in classrooms present recap and reminders of taught language skills. They provide evidence of the curriculum content being taught.

The school exposes the pupils to interesting and engaging opportunities and activities to bring Irish language and culture to life. For example, all participate in Irish Week and in a school parade on Saint Patrick's Day with parents and teachers, including playing musical instruments, singing Irish songs and being welcomed and encouraged by the local community enroute.

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

Pupils are provided with a full curriculum in Sharavogue school, guided by the *Primary School Curriculum*. A strong emphasis is placed on Science, Technology, Engineering, The Arts, and Maths (STEAM). Meaningful integration of subjects takes place, as is integral to the Montessori philosophy.

As part of the Social Environmental and Scientific Education (SESE) curriculum pupils partake in Climate Action Week, Science Week and Engineering Week activities. The Let's Discover series, (CJ Fallon) Science, History and Geography books are used to support learning. Three hours are allocated to SESE per week. Pupils are currently working towards their fifth green flag which is based on the theme of biodiversity. The Green Schools' notice board promotes and records pupils' endeavours in this area.

Music, Visual Arts and Drama are taught in the school. Pupils' artwork is on display. Seasonal activities are included in the Arts curriculum and pupils partake in an annual Christmas concert. Pupils'

collaborative project work is also displayed on noticeboards throughout the school. Examples include a well-presented world habitat map, a project on the Great Wall of China and a project on the Pyramids of Giza. Pupils are encouraged to develop their communication skills and problem-solving skills through their shared work.

Teachers aim to develop self-confidence, self-awareness and a realistic 'can do' attitude to learning and to life, through the Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) programme. Mindful Matters (CJ Fallon) is used to support learning in this area and thirty minutes is allocated to this subject each week. Respect, acceptance of diversity, social, emotional and moral development infiltrate learning throughout the whole school day. A variety of methodologies are incorporated into lessons e.g., debate, role play, circle time etc. Wellness Wednesday takes place on the last Wednesday of the month. On this day, the focus is on partaking in activities which are known to improve a person's sense of wellbeing such as going for a walk or providing opportunities which facilitate social interaction.

Pupils receive 30 minutes tuition in French per week. Initially, emphasis is placed on developing oral language skills, using songs and rhymes, while in senior classes some sight vocabulary is introduced combined with some basic written work.

Physical education comprises a variety of outdoor activities. Multi-sports are taught each Monday by an instructor from Southside Sports. Senior pupils have access to an outdoor pitch at St Joseph of Cluny Secondary School. Hockey and tennis are undertaken by pupils from third to sixth class. All pupils attend swimming lessons at the Loughlinstown Leisure Centre once per week. Pupils take regular school walks to local outdoor amenities and to the Lexicon Library.

6.6. Special educational needs

Sharavogue Junior School prides itself on being inclusive and welcoming of all children. The Montessori philosophy supports the education of pupils with special educational needs, as curricular content is individualised and based on the learning style of the pupil. The low pupil-teacher ratio in the school enables the staff to cater for the learning needs of pupils, and to monitor progress, and identify needs as they arise in many cases. Where a pupil has a psychological report, the school makes every effort to take into consideration and to implement professional recommendations.

Early identification for academic, emotional, social and behavioural needs is prioritised as a whole school approach. The school implements the DE continuum of support in all classrooms. Identified needs once observed, are addressed through communication with the management team and with the parents of the pupil. The class teacher has responsibility for implementing the in-class continuum. A differentiated curriculum and appropriate in-class supports are put in place, and progress is monitored and shared with the team, and with parents. Where a pupil's needs cannot be met by differentiation and the classroom support plan, the pupil moves to a School Support Plan. This decision is made by the management team in conjunction with the Learning Support Teacher and Class Teacher. The full time Learning Support Teacher supports these pupils with additional one-on-one tutoring.

Section 7 Assessment and Record Keeping

There is a whole school approach to planning and assessment. Teachers' short-term and long-term class plans, which together with student support plans and IEPs, on-going assessment data, end of year reports, personal notes, and documentation from professionals and outside agencies comprise Sharavogue's very comprehensive assessment records.

Each pupil has their own file, which is kept in a locked press in the classroom. This file follows the pupil. It is handed over when a child moves into the next class. Pupils' assessment records are utilised appropriately to guide, support, and appropriately challenge. Work samples are gathered by the class teachers for the purpose of recording ongoing learning, and also for early intervention should the children experience any difficulties.

Weekly English and Irish spelling tests are held every Friday from Senior Infants to 6th Class. A weekly maths test takes place each Thursday covering all topics taught to date. Diagnostic testing is carried out at Halloween and Easter. Drumcondra test results are shared with parents. All test results are recorded and filed by the class teacher. Tests and results are also entered into the children's folders.

Formal Parent-Teacher meetings take place in November. The parents receive two school reports, one at Christmas and an end of year report in June.

Section 8 Other Relevant Information

Policies as requested by Tusla under the R2 School Information Form were provided, including Child Safeguarding and Child Protection policies, Health and Safety, Fire Safety, and confirmation of staff Garda Vetting. Parents are provided with copies of the school's policies. The school plans to include policies on the school website in the near future.

All staff members have been Garda vetted and have been trained in the implementation of Children First. All staff have completed the child safeguarding training. There is an appointed Designated Liaison person (DLP) and Deputy Liaison Person, and details are included in the Child Safeguarding Statement which is prominently displayed as required.

Section 9 Evaluation of the Education Provision and Recommendations

In my opinion pupils attending Sharavogue Junior School are in receipt of *a certain minimum education*, intellectual, physical, moral, and social. I recommend that children attending Sharavogue Junior School can continue to be included on the register for the education of pupils in places other than recognised schools.

Aspects of the provision that are successful include:

- The information provided by the principal, during the interview supplied a very comprehensive account of the school, the teachers, and pupil participation and achievement.
- The additional information which the principal prepared and emailed in advance of the visit, described all of the special features of the education provision at the school, and were evidenced during the assessment visit.
- Department of Education and Skills regulations are adhered to, and the Primary School Curriculum is fully implemented. Provision is augmented with French language lessons, special focus on Science, Technology, Engineering, and climate and environment, and careful attention to pupil well-being.
- The quality of planning, assessment, communication with parents, and special education provision.
- The well-equipped and inviting classrooms, common areas and corridors within the school building, school grounds, and play areas, and the variety of community links, all of which extend learning experiences for the pupils.
- The family atmosphere permeates Sharavogue Junior School, which prides itself on its wrap around support for pupils and their families.

The findings of the assessment were discussed with the participants on the date of the assessment. The participants were advised that the decision regarding registration would be made by Tusla – the Child and Family Agency: Alternative Education Assessment and Registration Service (AEARS).

Following the assessment, a draft report is provided to the principal, along with a Factual Accuracy and Feedback Form, which may be submitted within a specified timeframe, in response to the content of the draft report. The report, along with any information provided on the feedback form for consideration, is brought to the AEARS Registration Panel. The Registration Panel make decisions regarding registration of children in receipt of the education at the Independent School.

Section 10 Discussion of Finding of Report with Principal

The report was discussed with the principal at the conclusion of the visit on the 8th November 2022. I informed her that the decision with regard to the registration of pupils attending Sharavogue Junior School as receiving an education in a place other than a recognised school, would be the responsibility of the Alternative Education Assessment and Registration Service - Tusla Registration Panel. I explained that she would receive the draft report for factual verification, and in due course, the final report and the decision of the panel.

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 Sharavogue 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