

**ALTERNATIVE
EDUCATION
ASSESSMENT &
REGISTRATION**

Section 14 Education (Welfare) Act, 2000

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

**Independent School
Review Assessment Report**

Name of School

Sutton Park Junior/Intermediate School

Address

St. Fintan's Road
Sutton
Dublin 13

Telephone

01 8322940

Name of Principal/Director

Mr. Liam Burns

Name of Assessor/s

Billy Lawlor
Jane Merriman

Date of Assessment

28th April 2023

Date of Final Report

7th July 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.....	5
6.1.	General information	5
6.2.	Language and literacy skills	5
6.3.	Numeracy	6
6.4.	Irish	6
6.5.	Other areas of learning	6
6.6.	Special educational needs	7
Section 7	Assessment and Record Keeping	7
Section 8	Other Relevant Information	8
Section 9	Evaluation of the Education Provision and Recommendations	8
Section 10	Discussion of Finding of Report with Principal	9
Section 11	Outcome	9

Section 1 Background Information

1.1. School Hours

Opening Time:	08:45		
Closing time:	14:45		
Main breaks during the day:	10:05	to	10:25
	13:45	to	14:00

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)

Mr. Liam Burns

1.3. Sources of evidence on which report is based

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

- Information furnished in the annual update form R2 completed by the principal
- An interview with the principal
- Classroom visits and interaction with classroom teachers
- Examination of a sample of learning tasks completed by the pupils
- Observation of the educational materials in use
- A reading of the school's website.

Section 2 General Information and School Context

Sutton Park Junior/Intermediate School is an independent co-educational, multi-denominational day school catering for pupils from junior infants to sixth grade. The school was founded in 1957 by a group of local people and has a current enrolment of 184 pupils. This enrolment includes 20 pupils in the junior and senior infant classes who are under the age of six. The board of management (BOM) of the school is a sub-committee of the BOM of the senior school. The board of governors has overall control of each school. The board of management has oversight of all school policies such as those relating to discipline, antibullying, child protection, and health and safety. Pupils attending the school come from a wide catchment area in north Co. Dublin and many of these pupils come from an international background. Pupils are generally highly motivated and display a positive work ethic. A record of their attendance is maintained in the school roll book. Overall pupil attendance is described by the principal as being very good. Most pupils in the school transfer to Sutton Park Senior School to pursue their post-primary education.

The school enjoys the support of a very active parent-teacher association (PTA). All parents of pupils in the school are automatically members of the PTA and the committee is elected at the annual meeting. The association provides practical and financial support to enable the school to host events, activities and initiatives that enrich the pupils' experience of school life. It also facilitates the effective flow of information between the parents and the board of management and the school management team on appropriate school matters. Parental involvement is encouraged through attendance at weekly assemblies, newsletters and parent-teacher meetings.

Section 3 The Principal and Staff

Staffing at the school consists of a principal and eleven class teachers. The principal also assumes responsibility for significant teaching duties in Mathematics, History and Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE). There is a specialist teacher for Music and specialist teachers are also available for Physical Education, Spanish and French. The post-primary school shares a science teacher with the school. A learning support teacher is also employed. The principal oversees the development of yearly subject-specific schemes of work for each grade which are based on the requirements of *The Primary School Curriculum*. Staff members also plan on a term, monthly or weekly basis at their own discretion. All staff members have received Garda vetting clearance. There is a child protection policy in place. It is displayed at reception and is available online to parents. The school's child safeguarding statement and risk assessment is currently being reviewed to ensure it is in line with all requirements.

The principal is assisted in the discharge of his duties by the deputy-principal who has responsibility for liaising with staff and coordinating extra-curricular activities. Monthly staff meetings are held.

Section 4 Time Devoted to Education

Formal teaching begins at 08.40 each morning and concludes between 14.45 to 15.45. The school is in operation for approximately 167 days a year.

Section 5 The Learning Environment

The school is situated on a nine-acre site and the learning environment is bright and spacious. The original school building has been extended with the addition of purpose-built classrooms. All classrooms contain the most up-to-date equipment and resources. There is a particular emphasis on providing a range of practical mathematical and scientific equipment. School facilities include a well-stocked, fully functioning library, two computer rooms, three banks of iPads used by all classes and interactive whiteboards in each classroom. Pupils have access to a science room and art room in the secondary school. There is a multi-purpose hall available to the pupils and a wide range of outdoor facilities including a sports field, basketball court and a school playground. The classrooms are modern and bright and stocked with a wide range of concrete materials and educational charts. The corridor areas contain attractive displays of pupils' work.

Section 6 The Educational Activities

6.1. General information

The content and subject divisions of *The Primary School Curriculum* inform teaching and learning in the school. Experiential learning is promoted, where the pupils move from the concrete to the abstract. Textbooks support classroom practice but do not determine the pupils' learning. The *Aistear* programme is used in the junior grades.

6.2. Language and literacy skills

In the early grades the aim of the programme is to give pupils a structured introduction to reading and writing. The pupils receive direct instruction accompanied by guided practice both individually and in groups. A range of methodologies is used including a phonics approach and whole word recognition using a variety of attractive materials. The Oxford Reading Tree programme is used up to grade 2 as the base for developing reading skills and the reading of novels is introduced from third class up. The school library provides pupils with a wide selection of reading material and pupils are encouraged to bring books home for recreational reading.

The importance of language is stressed at all levels in the school and classroom programmes incorporate the use of discussion and debate as a central learning strategy. Penmanship skills are developed from junior infants and through the various classes. A handwriting policy is implemented, and weekly handwriting practice takes place. Pupils participate in writing workshops and in writing competitions.

6.3. Numeracy

A differentiated approach to the teaching of the programme in Mathematics is promoted. Baseline assessment of pupils' mathematical ability takes place in the junior infant grade and the programmes at each level are matched to pupil ability. The school principal is active in overseeing this process. All classrooms contain dedicated mathematical areas to promote pupil interest in the subject. The programme is supported using textbooks and online resources.

6.4. Irish

Irish is taught in all classes and input in the language is based on pupil ability and previous pupil experience of learning and understanding the language. The school serves a significant number of pupils from an international background so there is a particular emphasis placed during lessons on developing pupil understanding of Irish culture. This is also connected to history lessons, geography lessons and developing an appreciation of Irish music. The school participates in initiatives to promote Irish as a means of communication including promoting *Coicís na Gaeilge* each year.

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

Lessons in French and Spanish are taught during the school day to pupils from fourth to sixth grade. An enrichment programme is also in place and afternoons are set aside during the year for visits to places of cultural interest related to the content of the curriculum. The school actively encourages visits from outside personnel who share their interests and expertise with the pupils. The school is committed to the Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Maths (STEAM) initiative. Particular attention is given to providing lessons in Art and Drama. An art suite is shared with the senior school. Music lessons are delivered by a specialist music teacher.

Child protection and development are promoted through the teaching of the programme for Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE). The principal takes personal responsibility for delivering the Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) element of the programme. The school is highly committed to its pastoral care obligations. The school's anti-bullying policy is actively implemented and there is zero tolerance for bullying. An intermediate school council has been established and is actively involved in discussions around various projects including the Green School programme. All classes engage in a physical education programme. Pupils avail of an extensive range of sports facilities and the programme is delivered by a qualified PE teacher.

Due care and attention are given to all other aspects of the Primary School Curriculum at each grade. Specialist information and communications technology (ICT) lessons are taught. These lessons enhance pupil experience in computers and interactive whiteboards. Pupils can avail of one-to-one music lessons in various instruments during the school day. Pupils perform at school assemblies and concerts throughout the year.

6.6. Special educational needs

Pupils receiving special educational needs (SEN) support have all been psychologically assessed and appropriate programmes are in place to meet their learning needs. Pupils present with a range of conditions including dyspraxia and autism. Pupils receive support on an in-class basis or a withdrawal basis as appropriate. Lessons in English as an alternate language (EAL) are also given to pupils. EAL lessons take place four times a week.

Section 7 Assessment and Record Keeping

A range of assessment techniques is in place to ensure thorough monitoring pupil progress and diagnosis of learning challenges faced by the students. Teachers are cognisant of the importance of differentiation, both for pupils with special educational needs and for those with exceptional abilities. Teacher-directed assessments, both through pupil observation and class tests, is a feature from junior infants upwards and are undertaken twice each year. Attainment testing, using the Drumcondra tests, is administered from first grade to sixth. The Sigma-T and Micra-T assessment tools are administered in September.

Formal parent-teacher meetings are held twice a year, and parents receive two written reports during the year on their children's progress. Teachers are also always available to discuss pupil matters with parents.

Section 8 Other Relevant Information

The schools R2 application also provided a number of policy and certification documents. The following is a summary of documents provided:

- School calendar and timetables
- Health and Safety policy statement
- Safeguarding and Welfare: all staff vetted by National Vetting Bureau
- Child Safeguarding statement as required by Child Care Act 2015
- Fire safety compliance certificate.
- Insurance arrangements.
- Food preparation.

Section 9 Evaluation of the Education Provision and Recommendations

In my opinion, the education provided to the pupils in Sutton Park Junior/Intermediate School can be characterised as “a certain minimum education, moral, intellectual and social”. The reasons I have formed this opinion of the educational provision in the school are as follows:

- The quality of leadership and management offered by the principal and deputy principal
- The range and variety of curricular provision available to the pupils
- The management of pupils at classroom level and the positive relations that are fostered in the school community
- The employment of suitably qualified staff
- Commitment to curricular planning and preparation, as well as regular reporting to parents on pupils’ learning progress
- Provision of learning support to pupils with learning needs
- A rich variety of resources available to enhance teaching and learning, both within classrooms and in the school’s campus facilities
- Displays throughout the school which highlight and celebrate the pupils’ achievements
- The emphasis placed on continuous assessment, both formative and summative, at each class level.

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 Mr. Liam Burns, principal, and it was stated that the recommendation would be to retain the pupils of Sutton Park Junior/Intermediate School on the register. The final decision regarding registration will be made by the Alternative Education Assessment and Registration Service Tusla, Child and Family Agency.

Section 11 Outcome

Outcome of Tusla Alternative Education Assessment and Registration Service Panel Regarding Requirements for Section 14 Registration of Children Attending the School

Following the Assessment, the Registration Panel decided that children attending Sutton Park Junior/Intermediate 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