

Section 14 Education (Welfare) Act, 2000

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

**Independent School
Review Assessment Report**

Name of School

The Teresian School

Address

12 Stillorgan Road, Donnybrook, Dublin 4, DO4 E9X5.

Name of Principal/Director

Lynda McHale

Name of Assessor/s

Lisa Duffy
Jane Merriman

Date of Assessment

6th November 2024

Date of Final Report

4th March 2025

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Section 1 Background Information

1.1. School Hours

Opening Time:	09:00		
Closing time:	14:45		
Main breaks during the day:	10:30	to	10:45
	12:15	to	13:00

Is school in operation for more than five years?

Yes	
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If no, please give date on which school commenced operation

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

(Normally interview should take place with the principal)

Lynda McHale

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
- Review of the school's website www.teresian.ie
- Review of school policies provided during the assessment
- Relevant School documentation as referenced in the report and including:
 - Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment
 - Health and Safety Statement

Section 2 General Information and School Context

The Teresian School, consisting of a pre-school, junior school and secondary school, is located on a 5-acre campus in Donnybrook, Dublin 4. The junior school, which is the subject of this review assessment, is a private, Catholic, girls' school, catering for girls from four to twelve years of age. It was founded in 1965 and serves pupils from a range of backgrounds. The school is under the trusteeship of The Teresian Association, a group committed to living Christian values in their life. The Association was founded in 1911 by St. Pedro Poveda in Spain and runs a number of schools in Spain, Latin America, the Philippines and Dublin. The school's first Junior School Advisory Committee, consisting of three trustee members, three trustee nominees, a parent, a teacher and the principal, was established at the beginning of the current academic year. The intention is to hold at least six formal Junior School Advisory Committee meetings per year.

The motto of The Teresian School is *Joy, Fortitude and Love* and this ethos is incorporated into every aspect of school life. The Povedan philosophy, which is deeply embedded in the school culture, emphasises putting "*the least and the last first*". The school is inclusive, welcoming students from a diverse range of backgrounds and religions. In line with the Roman Catholic ethos of the school, pupils in second and sixth classes are prepared for the sacraments of reconciliation, Eucharist and confirmation.

The Teresian School prides itself on cultivating a family like atmosphere within the school. Parental involvement is encouraged and valued, with parents often assisting at school events or inspiring the girls as guest speakers. The school is fortunate to have the support of a very active parents' council. This comprises of sixteen parent members, as well as a teacher representative, and the principal. Communication with parents is via a weekly email and termly newsletters. Social events are organised and help foster and consolidate the family like atmosphere in the school.

A strong sense of community is important in the Teresian School, and the school is deeply rooted in the community which it serves. The junior and senior schools collaborate closely to enhance this strong sense of community. A sports co-ordinator and an ethos co-ordinator are shared between the junior and senior school. A whole school Christmas carol service will take place for the first time in the new Jubilee Hall. Students from the science department of University College Dublin (UCD) undertake science projects with fourth and fifth class pupils. The students write letters, and send Christmas cards, to residents at the local nursing home. Pupils preparing for First Communion take part in the parish-based programme *Do This in Memory*.

For the purposes of registration, 137 pupils aged 6 and over are enrolled in the school. Enrolment levels are described as stable. The capacity of the school is capped at 200 pupils and the maximum class size is capped at 30 pupils.

The school is a member of the Association of Independent Junior Schools (AIJS).

Section 3 The Principal and Staff

Staffing at the school consists of the principal, Ms Lynda McHale, eight class teachers, a learning support teacher, and seven specialist teachers. Six full time auxiliary staff help facilitate the smooth running of the school. One privately funded SNA is also employed in the school. Staff meetings, attended by the principal, class teachers and the learning support teacher, are held once per month. Information is disseminated to other staff members after the meeting. Continuous professional development (CPD) is supported and encouraged at The Teresian School. Staff undertake relevant courses and are encouraged to share professional knowledge at staff meetings, cultivating a culture of collegiality within the school. Newly qualified teachers are supported through the *Droichead* process.

An in-school management system is currently being developed in the school. Currently there is one AP1 postholder in the school. Her duties include scheduling and timetabling, organising CPD and overseeing information technology (IT). There are plans to develop an AP2 post in the future.

Section 4 Time Devoted to Education

The school operates for 166 days per academic year. The new school year commences in late August and finishes in early June. The school opens its doors daily at 08:00 to facilitate the early drop off of students. Students are fully supervised during this time. School officially begins at 09:00 and ends at 14:45. Students receive 15 minutes morning break from 10:30 to 10:45 and 45 minutes lunch break from 12:15 until 13:00. The school offers an extensive range of optional afterschool activities and care from 14:45 to 18:00 every day.

Attendance levels are described as good, and a record is kept of all pupil attendance. In class, teachers follow a timetable, which were submitted with the R2 Annual Update Form.

Section 5 The Learning Environment

The Teresian School campus of 5 acres was extensively refurbished in 2017 with the addition of a large multipurpose hall and new classrooms. The grounds boast an AstroTurf sports pitch, tennis courts, basketball courts, raised beds and an outdoor classroom. Sport and play facilities, as well as the impressive *Victoria Diez* Library, are shared with the secondary school. The junior school is located across two separate buildings, and a secure and enclosed play area connects the two areas. Playground markings enhance this space. Onsite bicycle parking promotes sustainable travel and physical activity.

Inside, the learning environment is spacious, clean, bright and welcoming. Inspirational and affirming messages are clearly visible throughout the school and help reinforce the school ethos and create a culture of positivity and kindness. The main entrance hall is welcoming, visually stimulating and vibrant. There are eight classrooms in the junior school, as well as a learning support room, staff room, meeting room and small hall. Classrooms are warm, colourful and well resourced. All classrooms are equipped with interactive white boards. The school library, as well as individual classroom libraries, are well stocked. Pupils have access to *ThinkPads*. Hallways are spacious and well maintained. A hot lunch service is available for those who wish to avail of it.

Section 6 The Educational Activities

6.1. General information

The school follows the *Primary School Curriculum*, in addition to offering classes in Spanish and Violin.

There is one class at each grade level. A variety of teaching methodologies are used throughout the school, and pupils are provided with opportunities to work both independently and collaboratively. Information technology is utilised across all learning areas. The use of the local natural environment to enhance pupil's learning experiences is commendable. Curriculum maps have been drawn up to ensure that all key skills and concepts are studied as pupils progress through the school.

An extensive and varied range of extra-curricular activities are also on offer after school, giving the girls the opportunity to experience a diverse range of activities. Weekly assemblies promote the school's values and celebrate students' achievements. The Pastoral Care Team support the students' learning and social, emotional and behavioural needs. As stated on the school website www.teresian.ie, *It is our aim that the students in our care receive a well-balanced and holistic education and that they will develop core values which will stand to them for life.*

A whole school self-evaluation and strategic plan is currently being devised in conjunction with the secondary school. Upon completion, this will be implemented throughout the school.

6.2. Language and literacy skills

There is a strong emphasis on public speaking in The Teresian School. Language learning permeates the entire day and receptive and expressive oral language skills are constantly being developed through the learning of topic specific vocabulary and through participation in presentations, dramas, Aistear, assemblies and feiseanna. The *Mighty Oak* public speaking programme has recently been introduced to pupils from Kinder A upwards. Pupils learn public speaking skills, such as how to hold a commanding presence or how to construct and deliver a presentation.

A strong emphasis is put on the acquisition of reading skills. Every classroom has its own library, and there is also an impressive and inspiring, child friendly school library. The school employs a librarian, who implements the *Accelerated Reader* test. This test gives valuable insights into students' comprehension levels and helps monitor pupils' progress in reading. Younger pupils develop their phonics skills using the *Jolly Phonics* programme. Levelled readers and novels are used as pupils progress up the school. Transition Year (TY) students engage in shared reading activities with students in Kinder A and B classes.

Pupils are given opportunities to write across the genres. Spellings are learned and tested weekly. Cursive handwriting is introduced in Kinder A and a high standard of penmanship was observed during the assessment. The language and literacy provision is enhanced through participation in *World Book Day* events, book fairs, the *Festival of Poetry* celebration and literacy related workshops.

6.3. Numeracy

The strands and strand units of the *Primary School Curriculum* are implemented throughout the school.

Classrooms visited during the assessment were rich in numeracy, with attractive displays and mathematical manipulatives evident in all classrooms. Concrete materials, maths trails and guest speakers are used to help pupils connect at a deeper level with their numeracy learning. The staff have recently undertaken training in the implementation of the new Primary Maths Curriculum. The promotion of maths talk and the development of mental maths skills is focused on during lessons. *Maths Week* is embraced and celebrated in the school. Numeracy updates are included in the termly newsletters. The textbooks *Master Your Maths*, *Maths My Way* and *Planet Maths* are used to support learning.

6.4. Irish

Pupils in the junior section of the school use the series *Abair Liom* to support them in their early learning of the Irish language. There is an emphasis on oral language development in the junior classes, and on activity-based learning. Pupils from first class onwards are using the textbook *Caint is Comhrá* to support their learning. Spelling is taught using *Fuaimeanna agus Focail*, which uses a phonics-based approach to the teaching of spelling. Pupils are encouraged to use Gaeilge neamhfhoirmiúil for simple commands and basic conversation throughout the day. The school expose pupils to interesting and engaging opportunities and activities to bring Irish language and culture to life, particularly during *Seachtain na Gaeilge*. These events, which include participation in Irish dancing and listening to Irish music, facilitate efforts to foster a positive attitude towards Irish among the pupils. Attractive Irish notice boards were evident in classrooms. Information on Irish activities is included in the termly newsletter.

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 and varied curriculum in The Teresian School which is guided by the *Primary School Curriculum*.

Spanish: All students receive tuition in Spanish every week, taught by a specialist Spanish teacher. Initially, emphasis is placed on developing oral language and listening skills. Creative and interactive methods are employed to improve fluency and develop oral language skills. Reading and writing skills are developed from third class upwards.

Arts Education: Music, visual arts and drama are taught in the school. Singing is taught to each class once per week by a specialist teacher. Children learn a wide range of both secular and sacred songs, and their singing enhances the many special events which take place in the school. The school choir is open to any student from Class 3 to 6. Music theory is also taught to the students. All children in the school partake in weekly violin classes, taught by a specialist violin teacher. The students gradually develop their skills from learning how to hold the bow and violin correctly, to learning how to play simple pieces of music.

Drama is taught by a specialist teacher. Pupils partake in Christmas plays and enjoy trips to see the Christmas pantomime. A highlight of the school year is when fifth and sixth class pupils stage an annual musical. Pupil artwork is on display throughout the school.

Social, Environmental and Scientific Education (SESE): The history, geography and science strands of the *Primary School Curriculum* are covered by class teachers, giving all students the opportunity to work as historians, geographers and scientists. The local environment, which is rich in natural resources, is used judiciously to support learning in SESE. Pupils were observed partaking in *Forest School* activities during the assessment, exploring and learning from their surroundings. Raised beds are planted with seasonal produce and pupils are also given the opportunity to work with TY students in the senior school polytunnel. The school partake in the Green Schools initiative and are working towards their Global Citizenship-Litter and Waste flag. They are successfully creating a culture of environmental awareness in the school and helping create a culture of sustainability. Students partake in hands-on experiments throughout the year, with a strong emphasis put on this component of the curriculum during *Science Week*. Guest speakers are also invited into the school to inspire students and to support them in their learning. Positive links have been established with the science department in UCD. Pupils have the opportunity to partake in STEAM academy after school if they so wish.

Physical Education (PE): PE is taught by a specialist teacher and all strands and strand units of the *Primary School Curriculum* are covered throughout the school. All students are encouraged to partake in a wide range of physical activities, including gymnastics, hockey, dance and athletics. An impressive array of sporting facilities is available in the school, including the large multi-purpose Jubilee Hall, a smaller hall, and a hockey pitch. An optional hour of physical activity, from 08:00 until 09:00 every morning, is available to students.

Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE): A strong emphasis is placed on pupil wellbeing and the promotion of the values which are intrinsic to The Teresian Association. A dedicated ethos class is timetabled once every two weeks, which is taught by the ethos coordinator. These classes help students live out key qualities nurtured through Teresian education. Initiatives such as *Friendship Friday*, *Solidarity Week* and *The Kindness Cup* are promoted in the school. The SPHE programme includes the delivery of the *Stay Safe* and *Walk Tall* programmes. The *Relationship and Sexuality*

(RSE) programme is delivered by an external speaker to children from 4th to 6th class. Sixth class pupils have recently engaged in mental health workshops which focus on emotion identification, emotion regulation and management of emotions. In line with the Teresian ethos of the school, pupils are taught to put “the least and the last first” and regularly engage in fundraising activities for those less fortunate than themselves.

6.6. Special educational needs

As stated in the *Learning Support Policy* of The Teresian School “All our children have a right to an education which is appropriate to them as individuals. We want all our children to feel that they are a valued part of our school community. As far as possible therefore, it is our aim to minimise the difficulties that children may experience.”

The majority of the children enrolled in the school can access the school’s curriculum through purposeful differentiation of work in class. However, if so required, a child may be able to access additional support in the form of one to one or small group teaching. A student support plan, derived from the continuum of support, is drawn up by the classroom teacher and learning support teacher in consultation with the parents. This is reviewed regularly to ensure that the needs of the child are being met.

No child is refused admission to the school solely on the grounds that she has special education needs, except when the provision required is incompatible with the resources available in the school. Parents are required to notify the school of their child's special educational needs in advance of enrolment and the principal may request a copy of the child's medical or psychological report, if one is available. If a child requires the support of a special needs assistant (SNA), s/he is privately funded by the child’s parent(s).

The development of a sensory room is due to commence shortly.

Section 7 Assessment and Record Keeping

Assessment is used to inform teaching and learning in The Teresian School. A range of assessment methods are used including teacher observation, self-assessment, peer assessment, project work and teacher-designed tasks and tests. Weekly and termly tests are undertaken by pupils. Standardised tests in English, spelling and mathematics are administered once per year. Parent/ teacher meetings take place twice per year, in November and March and two written reports are issued to parents each year.

Section 8 Other Relevant Information

Policies as requested by Tusla under the R2 Annual Update Form were provided, including the Child Safeguarding Statement and the Health and Safety Statement. Two staff members have up to date first aid training. 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 Designated Liaison Person (DDL), and details are included in the Child Safeguarding Statement, which is prominently displayed as required.

Procedures as required and identified in the Child Safeguarding Statement were reviewed and discussed. Recommendations were made regarding review of all procedures to ensure they are specific to the school, documented, and accessible to all staff as relevant.

Section 9 Evaluation of the Education Provision and Recommendations

In my opinion, pupils attending The Teresian School 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 holistic and inclusive approach to education which is evident in the school and is based on the principles of *Joy, Fortitude and Love*.
- The spacious, secure and well-equipped learning environment, which was extensively renovated in 2017.
- The inclusion of one hour's optional physical activity each morning demonstrates the school's commitment to promoting physical activity among the pupils.
- The cultivation of a family like atmosphere within the school.
- The promotion of the values which are intrinsic to The Teresian Association and the creation of a culture of kindness and justice in the school.
- The effective links which have been established within the community.
- The quality of leadership and management offered by the principal.
- The broad curricular provision on offer in the school. The school implements the *Primary School Curriculum*, as well as providing additional classes in Spanish and violin.
- The integration of IT into teaching and learning in the school.

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, Ms Lynda McHale, at the conclusion of the visit on 06 November 2024. We discussed the procedures that would follow. It was stated that the recommendation would be to register and retain the pupils of The Teresian School on the register. The final decision regarding registration will be made by the Alternative Education Assessment and Registration Panel - Tusla, Child and Family Agency.

Section 11 Outcome

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

Following the Review Assessment, the Registration Panel decided that children attending The Teresian 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