



An Ghníomhaireacht um
Leanaí agus an Teaghlach
Child and Family Agency

EDUCATION (WELFARE) ACT, 2000

ASSESSMENT OF EDUCATION IN PLACES OTHER THAN RECOGNISED SCHOOLS

UNDER SECTION 14 OF THE ACT



REVIEW ASSESSMENT REPORT

An Ghníomhaireacht um Leanaí agus an Teaghlach / *Child and Family Agency*

Uirláir 2-5, Foirgneamh Brunel, An Ceantar Theas, Baile Átha Cliath 8

Floors 2-5, Brunel Building, Heuston South Quarter Dublin 8

t. +353 (0) 1 771 8500 f. +353 (0) 1 771 8610 / info@tusla.ie

www.tusla.ie

NAME OF SCHOOL	St Michael's College Junior School
ADDRESS	Ailesbury Road, Dublin 4, DO4 A373.
NAME OF PRINCIPAL	Ms. Lorna Heslin
NAME OF ASSESSOR	Lisa Duffy Jane Merriman
DATE OF ASSESSMENT	05/11/24

DATE OF PREVIOUS ASSESSMENT	Assessment Type: Review Assessment Date: 09.05.2019 Assessor: Paula Callaghan Richard Coughlan
DATE OF DRAFT REPORT	24/01/25
DATE OF FINAL REPORT	28/02/25

SECTION 1: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

<i>Name of school</i> St Michael's College Junior School		<i>Date of assessment</i> 5/11/24
<i>Address</i> Ailesbury Road, Dublin 4, DO4 A373.		
<i>Telephone</i> (01) 2189440		<i>E-mail</i> dhanley@stmc.ie
<i>School hours</i> <i>Opening time:</i> 08:45 <i>Closing time:</i> 14:55	<i>Main breaks during the day</i> <i>From</i> 10:25 <i>to</i> 10:40 <i>From</i> 12:30 <i>to</i> 13:10	<i>Is school in operation for more than five years?</i> Yes <i>If no, please give date on which school commenced operation</i> 00/00/0000
<i>Name of principal and/or other teacher(s) interviewed (normally interview should take place with the principal)</i> Ms. Lorna Heslin (Principal)		

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.stmichaelscollegejunior.com
- Review of www.spiritaneducation.ie
- Review of the *Junior School Annual 2023*
- Relevant School documentation as referenced in the report and including:
 - School Calendar
 - Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment
 - Health and Safety Statement

SECTION 2: GENERAL INFORMATION AND SCHOOL CONTEXT

St. Michael's College Junior School is an independent, fee-paying Roman Catholic school, catering for boys from junior infants to sixth form. The school shares its campus and extensive facilities with St. Michael's College Senior School. The Junior and Senior school were originally established in 1944, and an onsite preschool has been operational since 2012.

The school is owned by the Congregation of the Holy Spirit in Ireland and is under the patronage of the Spiritan Education Trust (SET). The SET is guided by the motto of the congregation, '*cor unum et anima una*' (*one heart, one soul*) and values diversity as a gift from God. Pupils of all religions are welcome in the school. The seven core values of Spiritan education permeate school life. These are openness to the spirit, a sense of community, option for the poor, commitment to service, global vision, high educational standards and personal and faith development.

A Board of Management, consisting of a chairperson, three patron nominees, two parent nominees, one teacher nominee and the principal, manage the school. Meetings take place at least twice per term and an agreed statement is circulated to the school community after each meeting. The term of the Board of Management is three years.

An active Parents' Association, comprising of 8 members, works in partnership with the school staff for the benefit of the pupils. The term of office is 2 years and members are elected annually at the Annual General Meeting. The association meets once per month during the academic year and a biannual newsletter is published to keep parents up to date on the achievements of the association. This widespread support from the parent body assists the staff in providing a positive educational experience for the pupils in the school.

The school is deeply rooted in the community which it serves and this connection with the wider school community is highly valued. The sacraments of First Communion and confirmation take place in Merrion Road Church. Pupils regularly fundraise for worthy causes, which are close to their hearts. A past pupils' association helps pupils stay connected with each other even after they leave the school.

There are currently 306 boys, age 6 and over, enrolled in the school. Attendance levels are described as excellent.

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 an administrative principal, thirteen class teachers, one full time and two-part time special education teachers, five special needs assistants (SNA's) and a full-time specialist physical education (PE) teacher. The school also benefits from having a chaplain. All teachers are registered with the Teaching Council. Newly qualified teachers are supported through the *Droichead* process. One full time and two part time auxiliary staff members are also employed in the school. As indicated on the R2 form all staff have been Garda vetted.

An in-school management system is in place in the school. Currently there is a Deputy Principal, one AP1 and three AP2 postholders in the school. Their duties include taking responsibility for a range of curricular areas.

Formal, minuted staff meetings take place once per month. Whole-school curriculum plans are regularly reviewed and updated. Class teachers complete long-term and short-term curriculum plans and submit *cuntas míosúil*. Continuous professional development (CPD) is actively supported and encouraged by the Board of Management and the SET. Extra Personal Vacation days are given to those who undertake summer courses. Financial support is available to staff members who undertake a relevant postgraduate course. Some of the class teachers have completed *Droichead* training, and actively support newly qualified teachers through the probationary process. This commitment to supporting teachers' CPD in the school is commendable.

SECTION 4: TIME DEVOTED TO EDUCATION

The school provides morning supervision from 07:45 until the official start of the school day at 08:45. The junior and senior infant day finishes at 13:30, while the official end time for pupils from first form upwards is 14:55. Pupils receive a daily mid-morning break from 10:25 until 10:40, while lunch break is from 12:30 until 13:10. A comprehensive programme of after school activities runs from 15:00 until 16:00. The school is in operation for 167 days per academic year. A record of all absences is maintained on *Aladdin* software.

SECTION 5: THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

St. Michael's College Junior School is co-located with St. Michael's College Senior School. The campus, along with the impressive facilities are shared between these two schools and the preschool. There is one class grouping at each grade level from junior infants until second form, and two class groupings from third form through to fifth form. Pupils have the option of entering a rang lán Ghaeilge in sixth form, where there are two class groupings taught through the medium of Irish as well as one class group conducted through English. Class sizes are capped at 26 pupils. In sixth form, class sizes are capped at 24.

A large-scale building and renovation project, which developed and upgraded the junior school building, has recently been completed. Large, modern classrooms, as well as new special education teaching spaces, a dedicated science room, a specialist art room, a large multi-purpose hall, an outdoor courtyard garden and a dedicated library have been added. All classrooms are equipped with an interactive whiteboard, and a range of information technology is available to support and enhance pupils' learning. A seomra ciúin aims to support pupils' self-regulation.

The school is currently fundraising for the final stage of the *Building on Success- Phase 2* development programme, which focuses on the development of a new swimming pool facility.

SECTION 6: THE EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES

6.1 GENERAL INFORMATION

As stated on the school website www.stmichaelscollegejunior.com, (boys) *receive an education which emphasises academic progress in addition to the spiritual, sporting and artistic development of each child.* The school is following the *Primary School Curriculum*, and an emphasis is placed on the acquisition of knowledge and the development of concepts and skills. In class a variety of teaching methodologies are used, and pupils are provided with the opportunity to work both independently and collaboratively. A broad range of extracurricular activities and sport are on offer in the school. Sixth form pupils have the opportunity to act as prefects and experience added roles of responsibility.

6.2 LANGUAGE AND LITERACY SKILLS

The content of the language and literacy programme is guided by the strands and strand units of the *Primary School Curriculum*, with language and literacy development integrated into all other areas of learning. Pupils learn in a print rich environment. Pupils avail of the extensively stocked library to develop reading and comprehension skills. The *Jolly Phonics* programme is used in the infant classes to aid the development of reading and writing skills. Pupils are strongly encouraged to read aloud at home to their parents. Levelled readers are used with younger pupils, while classroom novels are introduced from third form upwards. A whole school approach to the teaching of spelling has been implemented in the school.

Oral language skills are developed through participation in assemblies, dramas and through the presentation of personal projects. Topic specific vocabulary is explicitly introduced and used in context, as evidenced by an inciteful and informative discussion on *Bridges* in one of the classrooms. Pupils learn to write in different genres and for different audiences using a whole school planned approach. All pupils write poetry and partake in *Poetry Week* events. The language and literacy provision are enhanced through the *Reading Buddies* initiative, author's visits and participation in literacy workshops.

6.3 NUMERACY

The numeracy programme aims to implement all strands and strand units of the *Primary School Curriculum*. Teachers have started to implement the new *Primary Mathematics Curriculum* and staff have availed of CPD in this area. The textbook *Busy at Maths* combined with the use of information technology (IT) are used to reinforce and consolidate learning. Maths journals are used to help pupils to communicate their mathematical thinking and to encourage them to reflect on their work. Pupils partake in *Maths Week* events. Classroom displays promote mathematics and celebrate pupils' achievements in this learning area.

6.4 IRISH

There is a strong emphasis on Irish in all classrooms with learning content guided by the *Primary School Curriculum*. The textbooks *Léigh sa Bhaile* and *Bun go Barr* are used to support learning. As part of the school self-evaluation process, the school is focusing on the area of teanga ó bhéal and have implemented strategies to improve pupils' learner outcomes in this area. Irish is strongly promoted during *Seachtain na Gaeilge*, when a variety of events are organised to increase pupils use of the Irish language. The option for sixth form pupils to enrol in a rang lán Ghaeilge for their final year in primary school is commendable. It is planned to introduce the use of standardised tests in Irish in the near future.

6.5 OTHER AREAS OF LEARNING

All areas of the *Primary School Curriculum* are taught in St Michael's College Junior School.

The Arts: The school demonstrates a huge commitment to the arts and all strands and strand units of the *Primary School Curriculum* are covered in the school. Education in the arts consists of teaching and learning across the areas of music, drama and visual arts. The school is fortunate to have a dedicated art room where pupils work with a wide range of equipment and materials. Pupils also learn about famous artists and respond to their work. Children's artwork is proudly displayed and celebrated in the school. A dedicated *Art Week* takes place annually. The provision is supplemented by trips to art galleries.

From junior infants to fifth form, all pupils partake in either an Easter or a Christmas concert. In sixth forms the pupils take part in a musical and are currently rehearsing for their upcoming musical *The Sound of Music*. In class, all pupils learn songs and listen and respond to music. Pupils have the option of auditioning to join the school choir.

Religion: The school is a Spiritan school, and the core values of the Spiritan Education Ethos guide all aspects of school life. A school Chapel is located within the campus, and many important school events are held here. Religious Education is taught using the *Grow in Love* programme. Pupils are prepared to receive the sacraments of penance and Holy Communion in second form and the sacrament of confirmation in sixth form. Parental involvement is a key aspect of sacramental preparation.

TY students support pupils as they prepare to receive the sacrament of confirmation through the *Faith Friends Programme*. The school partakes in *Catholic Schools Week*.

Information Technology (IT): The use of IT and the development of IT skills are integrated into all subject areas across the curriculum. Pupils have access to Chromebooks and laptops, and *Google Classroom* is used in the school. Pupils learn about online safety. Senior pupils undertake a weekly typing programme.

Physical Education (PE): PE is taught by a specialist teacher, and all strands of the PE curriculum are covered during the course of the academic year. The impressive sports facilities on campus are shared with the senior school. In addition to a large multi-purpose hall, a 4G astro pitch, rugby pitches, and a running track are available for pupil use. The school encourages all pupils to be physically active and to partake in a range of both competitive and non-competitive activities. Rugby is the main sport in the school. However, pupils also have access to a range of other sports including hockey, tennis, hurling, swimming, athletics, soccer, basketball, gaelic and golf.

Social, Environmental and Scientific Education (SESE): The history, geography and science strands of the *Primary School Curriculum* are covered by class teachers, giving all pupils the opportunity to work as historians, geographers and scientists. The school is fortunate to have a dedicated science room, where pupils can partake in hands on science activities and experiments. Pupils partake in *Science Week* activities and partake in workshops given by external speakers. The local environment is used to support learning in SESE. On the feast of Saint Michael, the boys celebrate the history of the school.

Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE): The SPHE curriculum provides opportunities to focus on the personal development, health and well-being of each pupil. At the heart of the school's Spiritan ethos is a commitment to the poor. All pupils participate in fundraising and charity events throughout the academic year. A *Friendship Week* is organised annually and includes activities to help the pupils develop and maintain friendships. The establishment of a student council is being considered to further support the pupil voice and enhance the facilitation of pupil leadership. Important links have been established with TY students in the senior school, who serve as positive role models for the primary school pupils. The *Stay Safe* and *Weaving Wellbeing* programmes, as well as relationships and sexuality education, are taught in the school.

6.6 SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

The Department of Education continuum of support is implemented throughout the school and appropriate steps are taken at the earliest opportunity to ensure that all pupils progress and achieve success at school. Additional support is available in the form of small group or individual teaching to pupils who are identified as requiring it. SNAs are deployed to optimise support for individual pupils with a range of needs across the school. The availability of a sensory room and a seomra ciúin, as well as a quiet yard space, enhances the learning experience for children with additional needs.

SECTION 7: ASSESSMENT AND RECORD KEEPING

Assessment practices range from informal assessments, including teacher observation to more formal assessments in the form of teacher designed tests, diagnostic tests and standardised tests. *Drumcondra Tests*, which are curriculum-based standardised assessments in reading, spelling and mathematics are administered to all pupils from first form to sixth form. Parents receive the results of these tests in both oral and written form. All parents receive two school reports, one at Christmas and an end of year report in June. From first form upwards, parents also receive progress report cards in October and March.

Formal parent/ teacher meetings are held in January. Parents are welcome to contact class teachers to make an appointment to discuss their child's progress, if so required.

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. All 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.

SECTION 9: EVALUATION OF THE EDUCATION PROVISION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In my opinion, pupils attending St. Michael's College Junior 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 learning environment, which was recently extended as part of the *Building on Success* development programme, ensuring that present and future pupils benefit from a modern, well equipped learning environment.
- The information provided by the principal during the interview supplied a very comprehensive account of school life and how the curriculum is implemented in the school.
- The promotion of the seven core values of Spiritan education.
- The quality of leadership and management offered by the principal, Ms Lorna Heslin.
- The effective links and positive relationships which are fostered within the school community.
- The commitment to supporting staff who wish to avail of continuous professional development.
- The integration of IT into teaching and learning in the school.
- The provision of opportunities for academic learning, physical activity, social interaction and engagement with the arts, which supports the holistic development of each individual child.

SECTION 10: DISCUSSION OF FINDING OF REPORT WITH PRINCIPAL

The report was discussed with the principal, Ms Lorna Heslin, at the conclusion of the visit on the 05/11/24. We discussed the procedures that would follow. It was stated that the recommendation would be to register and retain the pupils of St. Micheal's College Junior School on the register. The final decision regarding registration will be made by Tusla, Child and Family Agency.

SECTION 11: OUTCOME OF TUSLA AEARS REGISTRATION PANEL REGARDING REQUIRED STANDARD FOR SECTION 14 REGISTRATION OF CHILDREN ATTENDING THE SCHOOL

Following the Review Assessment, the Registration Panel decided that children attending St Michael's College 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.

The registration is subject to a periodic review by the Child and Family Agency.