Whole School Evaluation
REPORT

Cornanool NS,
Castlebar, Co. Mayo
Uimhir rolla: 14497N

Date of inspection: 6 April 2011
1. Introduction

Cornanool NS is a rural co-educational primary school situated five kilometres west of Castlebar. It is a Catholic school under the patronage of the Archbishop of Tuam. There are 40 pupils enrolled. The building was recently extended and refurbished and is very attractively presented and very well maintained. The board of management of the school was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report, and the response of the board will be found in the appendix of this report.

2. Summary of Findings and Recommendations for Further Development

The following are the main strengths of the work of the school:

- The board of management is very supportive and ensures that the school is well run.
- The school principal is a dedicated professional who provides strong leadership to the school community.
- All of the teachers in the school are talented and hardworking and give generously of their time for the benefit of the pupils.
- Very high standards of teaching and learning are achieved in English, Maths and Music.
- Services for pupils with special educational needs are well developed and classroom teachers take first responsibility for these pupils’ education.
- The school’s self-evaluation processes are well developed and the teachers are keenly aware of the aspects of school life that need further development.
- This is a vibrant learning community with a strong commitment to school improvement.

The following main recommendations are made:

- There is a need to review the current staffing arrangements for pupils with special educational needs to ensure that the most efficient use possible is made of the supports available.
- Sa Ghaeilge tá gá le forbairt a dhéanamh ar chaidheán labhartha na ndaltaí. (There is scope for development in the standard of Irish spoken by the pupils.)

3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management is commended for its commitment to the school and for the provision of support for staff development. The board has recently engaged in school self-evaluation by reviewing standards of pupil achievement in literacy and numeracy. This good work is highly commended. The board is advised to issue an annual report on its work to the school community. It is also advised that the accounts be certified annually.
- The principal is highly commended for her diligence and professionalism and for the high quality leadership she provides to the staff. She has a strong commitment to ongoing
school improvement and has succeeded in creating a vibrant learning community within the staff. She is ably assisted by her colleagues who share her enthusiasm for education.

- The school is very well resourced with a wide range of attractive and useful learning aids. This equipment is very effectively used to provide high quality learning experiences for the pupils.

- The management of pupils in this school is very good. Pupils demonstrated enthusiasm for their learning and were courteous and polite in their interactions with each other. In their responses to the pupil questionnaires all of the pupils report that they like coming to school and that they feel safe in the school and in the playground.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The quality of the school planning and school self-evaluation process is very good. The school plans are specific to the needs of the school and a system for review has been put in place. School self-evaluation has been established in the school and the annual analysis of standardised test results is an aspect of the good practice observed.

- The school plan is effectively implemented. Changes in teaching and learning programmes are based on the evaluation of pupil achievement to date.

- Individual teacher planning is of a very high quality. Lesson plans are well differentiated and reflect a keen understanding by teachers of the wide range of pupil needs within each classroom.

- School authorities provided evidence that, in compliance with Primary Circular 0061/2006, the board of management has formally adopted the Department’s Child Protection Guidelines for Primary Schools. Evidence was provided to show that these child protection procedures have been brought to the attention of management, school staff and parents; that a copy of the procedures has been provided to all staff (including all new staff); and that management has ensured that all staff are familiar with the procedures to be followed. A designated liaison person (DLP) and a deputy DLP have been appointed in line with the requirements of the guidelines.

5. Quality of Teaching, Learning and Pupil Achievement

- The quality of overall teaching, learning and pupil achievement is very good. Teachers are talented and hard working and engage in regular reflection and review of their practice. Class sizes are small and teachers demonstrate a keen awareness of individual pupil needs. Very effective methodologies are used to provide a range of learning experiences matched to these needs.

- Tá cáiliocht réasúnta maith bainte amach i nGaeilge. Tá Gaeilge chruinn líofa ag na hoidí agus múineann siad ceachtanna le spraoi. Léiríonn na daltaí caighdeán maith i dtuiscint na teanga ach tá gá le forbairt a dhéanamh ar Ghaeilge labhartha. Moltar níos mó béime a chur ar an gchur chuige cumarsáide agus níos mó deiseanna a thabhairt do na daltaí Gaeilge a labhairt go nádúrtha.

- A reasonably good standard is achieved in Irish. The teachers speak Irish fluently and accurately and they teach lessons enthusiastically. The pupils demonstrate a good standard in understanding Irish but there is a need to develop their spoken Irish. It is
advised that a greater emphasis be placed on the communicative approach and that more opportunities to speak naturally in Irish be provided for the pupils.

- Very high quality work was observed in teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English. In most cases, pupils achieve very impressive results in the standardised tests of attainment. Very effective strategies are used to promote independent writing in a variety of genres. The range and quality of work done in developing pupils’ reading skills is of a very high standard. Pupils’ oral language skills are very effectively nurtured.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics is very good. Regular assessment of pupil achievement is undertaken and good quality in-class support is provided to enhance teaching and learning. Very effective use is made of a wide range of concrete materials to ensure that pupils have a good understanding of concepts.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Music is very good. All pupils from First Class up can play a musical instrument. Very effective work is done in developing pupils’ skills in both musical literacy and composition. Pupils are provided with breadth and balance in the Music curriculum.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- This is an inclusive school and it welcomes pupils with special educational needs and Traveller pupils. There is a good range of teaching supports available in the school to meet the variety of pupils’ needs. Currently a visiting resource teacher provides support to a Cornanool pupil while the teacher based in the school travels to another school to provide support there. It is advised that more efficient use be made of the supports available.

- The quality of teaching approaches and interventions for pupils with special educational needs is very good. Very effective early intervention strategies are in place to alleviate learning difficulties. In-class supports are very well developed. The quality of Individual Education Plans devised for pupils is very good and these are shared with parents.

- A review of documentation provided by the school indicates that most of the pupils in receipt of support are making very good progress. Teachers are acutely aware of the challenges faced by a number of pupils in the school and are making every effort to provide appropriate interventions for them.

- The quality of home-school partnership is very good. Parents are supportive of the school and their involvement in their children’s education is actively encouraged. Responses in the parent questionnaires indicate a very high level of satisfaction with the school and how it is run.

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Appendix

School Response to the Report

Submitted by the Board of Management
Area 1  Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Staff and Board of Management of Cornanool N.S. are very pleased with this affirming report. We would like to acknowledge the courtesy and fairness shown by the inspector during the evaluation process.

Area 2  Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection.

Since the Inspection, the Board of Management & Staff have acted on the recommendations made in the report.