1. **Introduction**

Clonmany National School is a seven-teacher, co-educational primary school under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Derry. There are 158 pupils in the school and most classrooms accommodate more than one class level. Attendance patterns are satisfactory. The school participates in the Modern Languages in Primary Schools Initiative and in the School Completion Programme (SCP). The board of management of the school was given an opportunity to comment on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.

2. **Summary of Findings and Recommendations for Further Development**

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

- Clonmany National School is a very positive, secure and welcoming community which effectively nurtures the all-round development of its pupils.
- The board of management is very supportive of the school. It is highly commended for its efforts in developing the new school building which provides high-quality accommodation for teaching and learning.
- The teaching principal provides very good leadership and displays very efficient management skills. She has established highly effective collaboration and team work amongst the staff members.
- The teachers are very committed to their pupils. They are very interested in improvement and change and display willingness to embrace new methodologies and approaches.
- The pupils are enthusiastic and very well behaved. They co-operate fully with their teachers.
- The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. There were many instances of effective teaching approaches observed including the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) across the curriculum.
- Provision for pupils with additional and special educational needs is highly commendable.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- Whole-school literacy and numeracy assessment data should be analysed annually. This will facilitate further target setting and improvements in pupil performance.
- In the teaching of Irish, it is recommended that further emphasis be placed on the communicative phase as an approach to develop pupils’ oral language.

3. **Quality of School Management**

- The work of the board of management is effective. Members are enthusiastic and supportive of the school. They are committed to the development and review of whole-school policies and procedures. The board actively supports the professional development of teachers and facilitates their attendance at relevant activities.
• The quality of in-school leadership is very good. The principal is dedicated to providing a broad educational experience for pupils. The in-school management team works very diligently and contributes to the successful management of the school. Collaboration is effective and responsibility is shared purposefully across the team. It is recommended that the board formally reviews the duties of the post-holders on a regular basis to ensure that assigned duties are aligned to the emerging needs of the school.

• Teachers are progressive in their approach to teaching and show considerable commitment to professional development and collaboration. Two part-time teachers support pupils with additional learning needs. The three special needs assistants support pupils in the mainstream classrooms very effectively. The school benefits very significantly from the efficient, diligent efforts of its secretary, cleaner and caretaker.

• The classrooms are well resourced and provide stimulating learning environments. The school has recently been awarded a green flag due to its environmental awareness and care practices. Provision for ICT is highly commendable. There are excellent resources available to support literacy and numeracy in the learning-support setting. To ensure the maximum use of these resources, they should be catalogued and resulting lists circulated among teachers.

• The management of relationships with the school community is very good and parents are generous with their time in supporting school events. Parents are kept well-informed about school activities. The parents’ committee is very active and works diligently to raise additional funding for school needs. It is recommended that the parents’ representatives on the board of management attend meetings of the parents’ committee in order to support communication between the board and the parents.

• The overall management of pupils is very effective. The pupils co-operate fully with their teachers. Pupils’ responses to the questionnaires administered during the evaluation indicate that they feel very safe in their classrooms and in the playground. While it is commendable that pupils have some decision-making responsibility through their participation in the Green Schools’ committee, the establishment of a pupil council would further enhance their involvement in democratic processes.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

• The quality of whole-school administrative planning is very good. There is some evidence that the views of parents are sought on whole-school policies. This is good practice and should be developed further. A web site would facilitate the dissemination of policies to the school community.

• The overall quality of curriculum planning is commendable. Support services are often requested to provide guidance in the areas of classroom practice that the teachers prioritise for development. It is recommended that there be further review of the Irish plan with particular focus on the teaching of the communicative phase from the speaking strand and on the teaching of writing.

• Teachers are committed to school-self evaluation and are constantly seeking to improve provision for pupils. Their current priorities include the use of ICT in teaching and learning across the school. An e-learning plan is being drafted currently. This should include a developmental programme of ICT skills for pupils. An action plan to raise pupils’ performance in Mathematics is also recommended.
• The quality of classroom planning is very good overall. In the majority of classrooms, teachers provide very effective long-term planning with clear, time-bound targets. Short-term planning is very good in all instances.

• 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

• An iomlán, tá cáilíocht an-mhaith le sonrú i múinéadh na Gaeilge ach tá gnéithe le forbairt ó thaobh foghlaim na ndaltaí de. Tá úsáid an-mhaith a bhaint as teicneolaíocht an eolais, rímeanna, amhráin agus ábhair léirithe chuimhneacháin, tuisceantí agus suim na ndaltaí a fhósail. Baintear úsáid as na trí tréimhsí chumarsáide i ngach rang mar chuige i múinéadh na teanga. Tá deis, áfach, chuimhneacháin, agus a fhósail a dhéanamh ar an tríú tréimhsí chumarsáide chun caighdeán labhartha na ndaltaí a fhósail níos faide. Leiríonn formhór na ndaltaí caighdeán sásúil sa léi-theoireacht ach tá scóp chun forbairt an tríú tréimhsí chumarsáide a dhéanamh. Ba chóir seicliostaí measúnaithe a bhaint amach i bhfoilsmithe na ndaltaí.

• Overall, the quality of teaching in Irish is very good but there are aspects of the pupils’ learning that have scope for development. ICT, rhymes, poetry, songs and visual resources are used very well to promote the pupils’ vocabulary, understanding and interest in the language. The three language phases are used as an approach in all classes. However, there is scope for the development of the communicative phase to enhance the pupils’ oral language further. The majority of the pupils display satisfactory standards in reading; however, there is scope for development in the standard of the pupils’ writing. Objective-based assessment checklists should be devised to evaluate pupils’ progress.

• The quality of teaching and learning in English is good overall. Oral language development is emphasised and the pupils enjoy regular discussions and vocabulary enrichment opportunities. In some classrooms, the teaching of poetry is highly commendable. Pupils in most classrooms are grouped according to ability and are assigned appropriate reading texts. While there is enthusiasm for reading in all classes, a minority of pupils are hesitant in their word attack skills. The results of standardised tests indicate that reading is an area that continues to require attention. Pupils at each class level have plenty of opportunities to write; from pre-writing experiences at infant level to writing in different genres in the middle and senior classes. While, most of the pupils’ work presents well, the introduction of cursive writing at an earlier stage is advised.

• The quality of teaching in Mathematics, as observed during the evaluation, was good. In particular, there is very purposeful use of concrete materials, ICT and collaborative approaches in a number of classrooms. Throughout the school, pupils demonstrated an enthusiasm for problem solving and the practice, in one classroom, of solving a daily problem was very successful. While the quality of teaching observed was good, there is scope for development in the quality of the pupils’ learning and achievement. In this context, it is recommended that the pupils’ performance in standardised tests be analysed on an annual basis in order to help provide more focussed interventions at each class level in an effort to raise pupil performance.
The quality of teaching and learning in Physical Education is very good. The pupils are provided with highly suitable and enjoyable learning opportunities in games, dance, aquatics, athletics, gymnastics, outdoor and adventure activities. There is a very high level of pupil participation and engagement in activities and effective integration of pupils with special educational needs. The use of station teaching is very effective and facilitates pupils to practise skills using varied equipment. There was very good integration of Irish and Mathematics in the lessons observed. While there is some use of assessment checklists to monitor pupils' progress, this practice should be extended to all classes.

Suitable screening tests are administered to senior-infant pupils and standardised tests are used from first to fifth classes. Currently, the assessment data are used primarily to identify pupils who may need to attend for learning support. There is good use of self-assessment strategies in some classrooms and this should be augmented throughout the school.

The overall quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement across the curriculum is satisfactory. The active participation of pupils is ensured through the use of an effective range of teaching methodologies at each class level. While there is some evidence of differentiated provision, more challenging learning experiences should be offered to pupils of higher abilities. Some good use of collaborative approaches was observed in a number of classrooms and this should be developed further throughout the school. In their responses to questionnaires administered during the evaluation, the pupils indicated that they enjoy lessons and learning and that their teachers explain things very clearly to them.

6. Quality of Supports for Pupils

There is very high quality provision for pupils with special educational needs. The provision is co-ordinated very competently, teaching approaches are inclusive and effective; and there is purposeful use of in-class support, sensory support and ICT. A very good range of diagnostic tests is used to identify pupils' learning strengths and needs. Appropriate individual educational plans (IEPs) are formulated in consultation with class teachers and parents. The pupils' progress is monitored and recorded diligently. It is advised that copies of the pupils' IEPs be given to parents.

Early intervention procedures are effective for pupils with learning difficulties. Learning-support for pupils in English, Mathematics and social skills is provided using a number of approaches including in-class support and small-group withdrawal. Individual profile and learning programmes (IPLPs) are devised in consultation with class teachers. The lessons evaluated in the support setting were very effective.

Provision for pupils for whom English is an additional language (EAL) is good. There is careful assessment and planning in place and lessons are structured effectively. The pupils are progressing well. The school provides a welcoming environment for newcomer pupils and some key policies have been translated into their home languages.

Teachers are sensitive to any instances of disadvantage which manifest and endeavour to be as supportive as possible of pupils who may need additional support. Through the use of departmental funding, the school provides a book rental scheme and a lunch programme for pupils.
• Very useful guidance, resources and learning-support materials are provided to parents of pupils with learning difficulties. The end-of-year reports give satisfactory information to parents about their children’s performance across the curriculum. It is recommended that reports should include results of standardised tests.

• The school is involved in the School Completion Programme (SCP) and the monitoring of school attendance is prioritised. There is good engagement with parents in this regard. A part-time classroom assistant, funded jointly by the SCP and the board of management, supports literacy and numeracy activities throughout the school. A variety of in-school activities and some after-school sporting activities are organised and funded through the SCP.