1. Introduction

SN Réalt na Mara is located in Mulranny, on the shores of Clew Bay. It has an enrolment of 64 pupils. It has designated disadvantaged status and receives funding and a shared co-ordinator under the Delivering Equality and Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) initiative. The school building has recently been extended and refurbished. 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 quality of the work of the board of management is very good. The board members are professional, informed and interested in the work of the school.
- The quality of the management of resources is very good. The school has invested in a wide range of resources for teaching and learning.
- The quality of home-school communication is very good.
- The quality of pupil achievement in English and Mathematics is very good across the school.
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Science is very good. The school places a very strong emphasis on learning about, caring for and appreciating the local environment.
- The quality of teaching approaches and interventions for pupils with special educational needs is very good in the support classroom.
- The schools engagement with the Green Schools initiative and the development of their school garden is commendable.
- The quality of assessment is very good. Teachers document pupils’ personality traits and learning styles to ensure a holistic picture is created of each learner.

The following main recommendations are made:

- It is recommended that greater use is made of pair work across the curriculum.
- It is recommended that work is clearly differentiated for pupils of different abilities.
- It is recommended that there is less dependence on text-book activities and that creative writing in a variety of genres is promoted in Irish and English.
- It is recommended that clearer expectations of pupil behaviour are established in each classroom and that a regular review of classroom and school rules is undertaken.
3. Quality of School Management

- The quality of the work of the board of management is very good. The board members are professional, informed and interested in the work of the school. They ensure the school is maintained to the highest standards. They are aware of pupil outcomes in literacy and Mathematic and discuss curricular development on a regular basis.

- The quality of the work of the in-school management team is good. The principal was appointed three years ago. She has a clear vision for the school and focuses on pupil outcomes as a means to evaluate the success of the school. A significant majority of parents who completed questionnaires during the course of the evaluation agree that the school is well run.

- The quality of the management of resources is very good. The school has invested in a wide range of resources for teaching and learning. A particular emphasis has been placed on the development of information and communication technology.

- The quality of home-school communication is very good. Parents are adequately informed on aspects of school life that pertain to their child and feel welcome in the school, according to their responses in a questionnaire. Regular parent-teacher meetings are held and annual reports are issued at the end of the school year.

- The quality of pupil management varies within the school. It is recommended that clearer expectations of pupil behaviour are established in each classroom and that a regular review of classroom and school rules is undertaken.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The quality of the school planning and school self-evaluation process is good. The staff has devised a long-term plan with targets in such areas as literacy, numeracy and attendance. The school plan consists of extensive plans and policies. The newly established Parents’ Association should provide a useful forum for parental involvement in the planning process.

- The implementation and impact of school planning and self-evaluation is good regarding organisational areas. However, curricular plans are generic in nature and therefore do not positively influence teaching or learning. It is recommended that staff document the current very good practices observed during the course of the evaluation with a view to establishing whole-school approaches.

- The quality of classroom planning is good. There is evident continuity and progression in all schemes of work presented by teachers. The staff has recently adopted a whole-school approach to classroom planning.

Child protection policy and procedures

- 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 good. Classroom environments are attractive and informative. A range of teaching methodologies is employed across the curriculum, although pupils would benefit from additional use of pair work. It is recommended that work is clearly differentiated for pupils with different learning needs. It is further recommended that considering the ability of pupils, there is less dependence on text-book activities.


- The quality of learning and teaching in Irish is good. The pupils have a wide vocabulary. All teachers make effective use of ‘morning talk’. The pupils have achieved a high standard in Irish reading. It is recommended that a wider range of writing tasks is promoted and that a greater emphasis is placed on poems, songs and rhymes.

- The quality of learning and teaching in English varies between good and very good, while the quality of pupil achievement in English is very good across the school. Pupils are very well able to express themselves orally. They display an avid interest in books and are encouraged to read a broad spectrum of literary genres. The quality of handwriting in the middle classes is highly commended. It is recommended that a whole-school approach to handwriting is adopted to support this. It is also recommended that written activities are less textbook-driven to promote pupils’ literacy skills.

- The quality of teaching and learning in Mathematics is good, while the quality of pupil achievement is very good. All classrooms have attractive displays for Mathematics. Teachers make very good use of technology to stimulate interest. Pupils displayed competence across all strands of the Mathematics curriculum. It is recommended that teachers make additional use of pair work to promote the language of Mathematics. It is further recommended that explicit objectives for pupils with different learning needs are documented in each teacher’s schemes of work.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Science is very good. The school places a very strong emphasis on learning about, caring for and appreciating the local environment. The pupils are very knowledgeable on the local forests and sea-shore. Teachers organise very regular field trips and invite a variety of speakers into the school to optimise learning of the natural environment. The school’s commendable efforts with the Green Schools initiative and the development of their school garden ensure that parents are involved in the Science curriculum.

- The quality of assessment is very good. Teachers have begun the process of graphing pupils’ results which gives a clear picture of the school’s overall performance in the areas of literacy and Mathematics. They also document pupils’ personality traits and learning styles to ensure a holistic picture is created of each learner.
6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- The access of pupils with special educational needs or English-language needs to the school is very good. All pupils are included in all school activities.

- The quality of teaching approaches and interventions for pupils with special educational needs is very good. This is provided through the services of a shared learning-support teacher. A wide range of interactive activities which focus on the pupil's needs are presented, with a strong emphasis on pupil achievement. The school has recently begun the provision of in-class support which is proving very positive.

- The quality of outcomes and progression of pupils with special educational needs is very good. Pupils, through learning support, are achieving at their appropriate level and continue to make progress in literacy and Mathematics.

- The school also avails of the services of a DEIS co-ordinator who is shared with two other schools. The co-ordinator was absent during the evaluation. The quality of this service shows scope for development. There was no written evidence of plans of work for the current term, nor of progress records of previous work undertaken. While the school has availed of a Maths for Fun project last term it is recommended that Literacy for Fun and Science for Fun projects are also implemented. It is further recommended that home visits are an intrinsic aspect to the work of the co-ordinator as to date these have not been included in her work schedule. In addition, the co-ordinator is advised to play a pivotal role in working with families where pupils display poor attendance.

Published, October 2011
Appendix

School response to the report

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

We would like to thank the inspector for her very positive report. We found that the Whole School Evaluation was a valuable process for our school and we were very happy with the results.

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

We have taken on board the recommendations made and are now reaping the benefits.