1. Introduction

Cooneal NS is a co-educational rural school under the patronage of the Bishop of Killala situated six kilometres north-west of Ballina, Co. Mayo. Currently there are 109 pupils enrolled. The school is very well maintained and very attractively presented. 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 hard working principal is very committed to the school and is a dedicated and talented teacher.
- The school staff work well together and are positive and encouraging in their interactions with pupils.
- The board of management is effective in providing attractive and well maintained accommodation.
- Pupils are courteous and polite and engage well with their learning.
- Very good standards of teaching and learning were observed in most classrooms.
- Very good practice was observed in the delivery of special education.
- Useful whole-school approaches have been developed in assessing pupil progress.

The following main recommendations are made:

- Pupils should be grouped according to ability for literacy and numeracy and work provided should be matched to pupil ability.
- A culture of self-evaluation should be fostered in the school to facilitate on-going school improvement.
- There is a need for a greater focus on oral mathematics and frequent revision of topics covered.
- A whole-school approach to oral language needs to be developed.

3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management is commended for its commitment to the school and for the provision and maintenance of good quality accommodation and facilities. Currently parents pay visiting tutors for music and gymnastics classes during the school day. The board is advised to make alternative arrangements for the provision of these aspects of the curriculum.
• The enthusiastic and hardworking principal is highly commended for her dedication to the school community. She has succeeded in promoting a culture of teamwork and partnership. At present the in-school management team operates on an informal basis. It is recommended that the posts of responsibility be revised and that current priorities for the school be reflected in the duties assigned. It is further recommended that a mentoring system to support newly qualified teachers be developed by the school.

• The quality of the management of resources is good. Classrooms are well resourced and effective use is being made of the recently installed teaching laptops and digital projectors. Responses in the pupil questionnaires indicate that pupils do not often have opportunities to use computers. It is advised that greater use be made of this resource to enhance teaching and learning.

• The management of pupils in this school is very good. Pupils are eager to participate in their lessons and are courteous and pleasant in their interactions with each other and with adults. Their responses in the pupil questionnaires indicate a very high level of pupil satisfaction.

• The management of pupil records shows some scope for development. The school is advised to devise a system for tracking pupil progress to ensure that there is a comprehensive profile of each child throughout their primary schooling.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

• The quality of the school planning and school self-evaluation process shows some scope for development. The school has created extensive school planning documents and has also amassed a considerable body of data on individual pupil performance. However the school needs to make better use of this information to identify school strengths and weaknesses and to set targets for improvement.

• All teachers provide useful individual classroom planning. It is advised that an agreed format for recording progress be devised and that curriculum objectives realised be recorded.

• A culture of self-evaluation has not yet been established in this school. The school is advised to monitor pupil learning outcomes systematically and to evaluate the changes in the delivery of the curriculum in the light of this information. It is advised that this information be provided to the board of management on a regular basis.

• 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 teaching and learning and pupil achievement is good overall. Teachers are hard working and are well-prepared to deliver interesting and stimulating lessons. During the evaluation appropriate activities were provided and pupils engaged well with their learning. To further enhance this good practice it is advised that pupils be grouped
according to ability, particularly for literacy and numeracy and that lessons be
differentiated to ensure that work is matched to pupil ability. Responses to the parental
questionnaires indicate that a significant minority of parents have concerns in this regard.

- Tá éagsúlacht le feiceáil i gcáilíocht teagaisc, foghlama, agus caighdeán na ndaltaí sa
  Ghaeilge ó rang go rang. Tugtar faoi deara cáilíocht mhaith i múineadh na Gaeilge sa
  ranganna sinsearacha. Sa seomra ranga seo cuirtear béim ar chothú grá don teanga.
  Baintear úsáid mhaith as dramaíocht agus as obair bheithe chun deiseanna a thabhairt
do na daltaí a scileanna cumarsáide a threisiú. Moltar anois an dea-chleachtas seo a
  leathnú trasna na scoile. Baintear úsáid mhaith as Ghaeilge mar theanga bhainistíochta
  seomra ranga i ngach seomra.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Irish varies from class to class.
  Very good quality teaching of Irish was observed in senior classes. In these classrooms
  an emphasis was placed on fostering a love of the language. Good use was made of
  drama and pair work to provide the pupils with opportunities to enrich their
  communication skills. It is advised that this good practice now be extended across the
  school. Irish was used effectively as the language for classroom management in all
  classrooms.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in English is good overall, as is
  reflected in recent standardised test results. In the senior classes, drama is used very
  effectively to expose the pupils to high quality literature from a variety of genres. In these
  classes, oral language development is very well managed with structured activities
  provided to enhance pupils' vocabulary and fluency. There is a need for this good
  practice to be extended across the school. It is advised that pupils be provided with
  opportunities to use information and communication technology to publish their written
  work.

- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in Mathematics is good.
  Teaching in Mathematics was clear and well-structured with a worthwhile emphasis on
  the use of activity-based learning and the use of concrete materials. The school is
  advised to place a greater emphasis on oral maths, with frequent revision of topics
  previously covered. It is recommended that an agreed problem solving strategy be
  devised on a whole-school basis.

- Effective practice was observed in Physical Education. Lessons were well managed with
  a suitable emphasis on skill development. Pupils engaged well with the lessons provided
  and a high level of enjoyment was observed. It is advised that consideration be given to
  the use of station teaching in this area of the curriculum.

- Some very effective whole-school approaches to assessment were observed during the
  course of the evaluation. Teachers are well informed about pupil progress and are aware
  of individual strengths and weaknesses. Teachers are now advised to use this
  information to ensure that work is sufficiently differentiated to meet the wide range of
  pupil needs identified. Individual pupil attainments in literacy and numeracy should be
  tracked year on year and compared with performance in a non-reading intelligence test.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- This is an inclusive school and it welcomes pupils with special educational needs. The
  school's enrolment policy ensures equality of access.
• High quality teaching approaches and interventions for pupils with special educational needs were observed during the course of the evaluation. Good quality individual education plans have been devised. Targets were well chosen and were derived from the specialist reports available. Copies of these plans should be provided to parents.

• Some team-teaching strategies have been developed. It is now recommended that in-class support be provided to ensure the dissemination of specialist teaching skills to the whole staff.

• In the special education setting, regular assessment of progress and meticulous record keeping ensure that pupil progress is carefully monitored. These records indicate that pupils are making satisfactory progress in keeping with their ability.
Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

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

On behalf of the whole school community, the Board of Management of Cooneal National School wishes to acknowledge the professional approach of the Inspector to her work during the WSE in Cooneal N.S. The Board wishes to thank the Inspector for her courtesy to the pupils, staff, parents and Board of Management during the visit.

The Board is happy that the dedication and conscientiousness of all parties involved in the effective management of the school has been acknowledged and is also pleased that the high standard of teaching in Irish, English, Maths and P.E. has been noted by the Inspector.

The Board note the key recommendations and will endeavour to address them.

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

- Postholders’ duties have been revised to include responsibility for Literacy and Numeracy enhancement in the school.
- Pupils are now been grouped according to ability in all classes.
- A policy on self evaluation has been drafted and a culture of self evaluation has been introduced into the classrooms.
- Oral Language and Oral Maths have been highlighted and strategies are being put in place to enhance the quality of teaching and learning in these areas.