1. Introduction

Scoil Lorcán Naofa is a co-educational primary school with seventy pupils. It is located in the village of Tynagh, Co. Galway. Under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Clonfert, the school espouses a Christian ethos and aims to enable all pupils to experience success and to develop a love of learning. The school staff comprises three mainstream teachers, one resource teacher, one visiting learning-support teacher, two visiting resource teachers and one special needs assistant. 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, parents and staff collaborate effectively to create a safe, comfortable learning environment.
- An open, positive and friendly atmosphere prevails in the school.
- The teachers implement the *Primary School Curriculum (1999)* in a skilful, dedicated manner.
- The pupils are very well behaved and display pride and interest in their work.

The following **main recommendations** are made:

- The board should formulate a strategic development plan to guide its future work.
- The staff should focus on developing a culture of whole-school self-evaluation and should adopt a systematic approach to target setting in each of the curricular areas.
- Curricular policy statements should be developed further.
- Reports on individual pupil progress should be issued in written format to parents each year.

3. Quality of School Management

- The board of management functions effectively. Meetings are convened regularly and matters are dealt with as they arise. The board’s work has involved the enhancement of the school building, provision of parking facilities and ongoing review of the school plan. It is recommended that the board set out its future long-term plan of work in the form of a strategic development statement. It should also issue an annual report on the work of the school.
- The board diligently manages the school’s material, physical and human resources. A good range of teaching materials is available and a programme to enhance technological
resources has commenced. The school premises are very well maintained and mainstream classroom accommodation is adequate. There is a need to review the accommodation provided for support teaching.

- The in-school management team comprises the principal and deputy principal who collaborate very effectively to promote a positive, friendly school atmosphere. The principal manages the day-to-day running of the school in a very professional manner. She is very ably supported by the deputy principal who carries out a range of specific duties. The curricular duties attached to the posts should be reviewed so that they focus on empowering the post-holders to assume a leadership role in engaging the staff in action planning and target setting, and in evaluating and reviewing pupil achievement.

- The management of relationships with the school community is good. While the school does not have a parent association, parents are actively involved in supporting a range of activities. Parents receive copies of pertinent school policy statements and are informed of events through regular letters and newsletters. Information on individual pupil progress is provided to parents during parent-teacher meetings. It is recommended that the school provide parents with a written report on their child’s progress each year.

- The pupils are very well managed and present as respectful, mannerly, friendly and cooperative.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- The school plan contains a range of organisational and curricular policies specific to the school. There is a need to review elements of the plan and in particular to develop the curricular policy statements so that they provide very clear guidance as to the content to be taught and the methodologies to be used at each class level. There is scope also to involve parents more fully in the planning process.

- Classroom planning is of a good standard. All teachers prepare long-term and short-term plans, provide monthly accounts of the work covered and use a variety of modes to assess progress. Teachers should now work collaboratively to review classroom practice and to set clear time-bound curricular targets with the explicit purpose of improving the quality of pupils’ experiences and their standards of attainment.

- 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

- Gabhann taitneamh, tairbhe agus cruthaitheacht leis na straitéisí a úsáidtear i múineadh na Gaeilge. Cloítear go docht leis na gcur chuige cumarsáideach i bhformhór na ranganna agus fítear gnothú éisteachta, labhartha, léitheoireachta agus scribhneoireachta go ceardúil le chéile. Spreagtar na daltaí chun abairtí dá gcuid féin a chumadh agus feidhm cheart a bhaint as briathra. Cuirtear ar a gcumas filiochta aithris, amhráin a chanadh agus an fhheadóg stáin a sheinn. Ar an iomlán, labhraíonn na daltaí
The strategies used to teach Irish are enjoyable, beneficial and creative. The communicative approach is strongly adhered to in the majority of classes and listening, speaking, reading and writing activities are woven skilfully together. The pupils are encouraged to compose their own sentences and to use verbs correctly. They are enabled to recite poetry, sing songs and play the tin-whistle. In general, the pupils speak confidently, they read with understanding and they have opportunities to undertake different writing tasks. Reading resources should now be augmented and stronger emphasis placed on personal writing. More extensive use should be made of teaching phrases so that the pupils will be able to draw on rich idioms of speech when writing. It is also recommended that topics and sub-themes should be identified under the major language themes in the school plan in order to ensure continuity and to guide progression.

- In English, very purposeful work on language extension, word comprehension and communication skills occurs. Poetry is taught at each class level and the recitation skills of some pupils are of a very high standard. There is scope to broaden the work on poetry to include, at appropriate class levels, the exploration of the various poetic techniques. Anthologies of poetry should also be provided for the classroom libraries.

Successful strategies and attractive materials are used to foster early interest in reading. The importance of modelling reading is recognised throughout the school and group work is organised very effectively in some classrooms to focus attention on reading with clarity and expressiveness. Pupils, in general, read competently and their written work demonstrates a sound understanding of grammar and spelling. It is recommended that test results be carefully analysed to inform future target setting with a view to enhancing the overall levels of attainment in English.

- Effective group work characterises the teaching of Mathematics. Early Mathematics is approached in a very structured manner and tasks are carefully differentiated. Classroom environments are mathematics-rich and all teachers place emphasis on the language of Mathematics. Oral work is systematically addressed and pupils recall number facts swiftly and accurately. There is a need to ensure that an adequate amount of basic mathematical materials is available in each classroom and that concrete materials are used at all class levels. There is also scope to agree practice on the use of copybooks and to place greater emphasis on the recording of Mathematics, particularly in the area of problem-solving.

- A conscientious effort is made throughout the school to cover all strands and strand units of the music curriculum. The musical elements are developed through a variety of very enjoyable inter-related activities. Rhythmic activities are well structured and the pupils display a very good sense of rhythm. Some interval work is covered and chants, Irish songs, English songs, rounds, partner songs and anthems feature in the song-singing repertoire. Tin-whistle is taught from second class onwards and pupils are enabled to play musically and with a lovely tone. Pentatonic tunes are used in the teaching of tin-whistle and their usage should be extended to form the basis of a whole-school approach to music literacy.
6. Quality of Support for Pupils

- The support team comprises four support teachers and one special needs assistant. Supplementary teaching is provided on a withdrawal basis in one-to-one and group settings. Individual programmes of learning have been formulated in respect of each pupil. The programmes, for the most part, are appropriately matched to the pupils' needs. There is a need, in some instances, to specify more clearly the base-line from which the programmes commence. There is some variation in the quality of short-term planning and it is suggested that the teachers should meet as a team to share good practice and to collaborate on writing specific, measurable short-term objectives.

- The support teachers develop very good rapport with the pupils. Teaching and learning activities, in most instances, are well structured and paced and the pupils’ care needs are very conscientiously addressed. There is regular consultation with mainstream teachers and with parents.

- To enhance the support provision in the school and to ensure maximum benefit for the pupils, consideration should be given to reorganising the service. In so doing, attention should be placed on providing in-class support and increasing the emphasis on early intervention.
Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

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

The Board of Management of Tynagh N.S., on its own behalf and on behalf of the staff and school community, thank the inspector for the thorough, professional and courteous manner in which she carried out the W.S.E. The Board of Management is very pleased with the report and welcomes the positive findings and recommendations made.

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

Further to the recommendations in the report the following has been undertaken:

- A review of the school’s storage area has been undertaken and a new storage room has been made available to the staff from the start of this academic year.
- Reports on individual pupil progress have been issued in written format to parents for the year 2010/2011.
- All recommendations will form the basis for any further planning within the school.