1. Introduction

Gaelscóil Inis Cóithaidh is a ten-teacher, vertical and co-educational Catholic primary school under the patronage of Foras Pátrúnachta na Scoláanna LánGhaeilge. There are 173 on the school roll and attendance is very good in the main. The board of management was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the evaluation, and the response of the board will be found in the appendix to this report.

2. Summary of Findings and Recommendations for Further Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The following are the <strong>main strengths</strong> of the work of the school:</th>
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<tr>
<td>• The board of management and the parents’ association are dedicated to the ethos and work of the school.</td>
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<td>• The principal and teaching staff work together effectively.</td>
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<td>• All the teachers speak rich and fluent Irish and are commended for promoting the language as the medium of communication in the school. They succeed in arousing pupils’ interest in learning through skilled use of a range of teaching strategies.</td>
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<td>• The pupils behave politely, they are very co-operative and they concentrate on their learning tasks without difficulty.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• In general, the quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement is good.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• The pupils reach a high standard of oral Irish in terms of fluency, richness and accuracy.</td>
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<th>The following <strong>main recommendations</strong> are made:</th>
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<td>• It is recommended that the curriculum leadership of in-school management be further developed in order to progress the agreed priorities of the school.</td>
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<td>• It is recommended that communication structures with parents be further developed and that parental participation in the planning process and in pupil learning be promoted more systematically.</td>
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<td>• It is recommended that more regular opportunities be given to pupils to write in a range of genres and that a process approach to writing be implemented more systematically in Irish and in English.</td>
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<td>• It is recommended that more regular opportunities be provided for pupils to work as historians and that the various themes in History be explored at a deeper level.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• It is recommended that an assessment policy be developed and implemented to cater for the various ability levels among the pupils.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• It is recommended that aspects of the provision made for pupils with special needs be further developed, particularly in terms of assessment, planning and reviewing the effectiveness of intervention.</td>
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3. Quality of School Management

- The board is structured appropriately and it is dedicated to the ethos and work of the school. The board fulfills a particular role regarding the formulation of administrative policies. It is recommended that the board address the quality of education in the school on a more regular basis, both in terms of teaching and pupil achievement. It is also recommended that the admissions policy be reviewed with regard to the appropriate legislation and that an attendance strategy be developed.

- The principal carries out her administrative duties appropriately. She fosters a pleasant and positive atmosphere in the school and school decisions are reached through consensus. She is to be commended for the promotion of the Irish language and culture. Responsibilities are allocated to all members of the in-school management team in line with agreed priorities and they fulfill their duties diligently. In order to promote learning, it is recommended that leadership be further developed in implementation of the curriculum. The members of the in-school management team should formally meet on an even more regular basis to progress agreed curriculum priorities.

- The teaching staff are a particular strength and all the teachers possess a richness and fluency of language. Although the school is located in a temporary building, it is commendable that it is maintained so well and that a beneficial learning environment is created. The use made of a broad range of resources to support teaching and learning in the various curricular areas is commended. The school management is to be commended for its provision of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) resources. It is noted that a school blog and a school committee to promote ICT have been established.

- Appropriate structures are in place to inform parents of their children’s progress. The parents’ association has a great interest in the school and they are very willing to give their support. Praiseworthy structures are in place for communicating with parents. In the interests of further developing home-school liaison, however, it is recommended that a policy be agreed and that more consistent communication structures be implemented. It is also recommended that parental participation in and support for pupil learning be systematically developed.

- A very positive relationship is fostered between the teachers and the pupils and among the pupils themselves. In the pupil questionnaires nearly all pupils report a good relationship with their peers. The pupils behave politely, they are very co-operative and they concentrate on their learning tasks without difficulty. Effective use is made of a range of strategies to recognise the efforts made by pupils to learn.

4. Quality of School Planning and School Self-evaluation

- In general, the quality of school planning is good. A plan is provided for every aspect of the curriculum and for a range of organisational areas through a process of staff collaboration. It is recommended that relevant parties, particularly parents be involved in the planning and review process and that parents be informed of relevant areas of the school plan through suitable means. The school self-evaluation process has begun. To be fully effective, the various aspects of this process should be formalised and broadened. In particular, it is recommended that action plans be developed to address the school’s priorities for development.

- Every teacher engages in long-term planning and almost all engage in short-term planning. However, there is variation in the standard of planning, and it is recommended
that the learning objectives be recorded clearly in every teaching situation. Every teacher keeps monthly progress records of learning. It is recommended that a system be agreed regarding the formulation of these records to ensure continuity and progress in the school. In particular, it is recommended that these records focus more clearly on pupils’ learning outcomes and that they be used as an analysis of the implementation of the curriculum.

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. It is recommended that parents are made aware of these child protection procedures.

5. Quality of Teaching, Learning and Pupil Achievement

- In general, the quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement is good. The teachers succeed in arousing pupils’ interest in learning through skilled use of a range of teaching strategies. There is a positive learning atmosphere evident in every classroom. The pupils willingly and actively participate in all activities and they are making good progress according to their ability.

- The quality of provision for Irish is good. The pupils speak with fluency, accuracy and a richness of language. A range of suitable strategies is employed to skilfully develop emergent reading skills. The result of this work is evident in the commendable fluency which is fostered generally and in the opinions of pupils as expressed in the pupil questionnaires. However, more structured attention should be paid to the development of discrete reading and comprehension skills. The pupils in the senior classes have a creditable standard of writing. Although noteworthy examples of pupils’ writing are evident throughout the school, independent writing skills and handwriting skills should be developed in a more systematic manner. In particular, it is recommended that the pupils get more regular opportunities to practice on a range of genres and to receive more systematic feedback on their efforts.

- The quality of provision for English is good and pupils speak with fluency and confidence. It is recommended, however, that oral language skills be developed on a more systematic basis through regular oral language lessons based on the range of curriculum objectives. Pupils achieve a creditable standard in reading, with a praiseworthy minority achieving a high standard. It is advised, however, that specific and discrete objectives be provided in planning and teaching in order to develop the range of reading skills systematically, particularly comprehension skills. Pupils are provided with opportunities for functional writing mostly. While some praiseworthy examples of personal writing were in evidence, it is advised that the pupils be provided with more regular opportunities to write in a wider range of genres and that a process approach to writing be implemented more systematically through the school.

- The quality of provision for mathematics is good. Pupils achieve a satisfactory standard for the most part and the results of the pupils questionnaires show that the school is doing well in progressing pupils’ learning in Mathematics. Among the good teaching practices were skilful use of concrete materials and games, a strong emphasis on the
language of mathematics, group work and use of the environment and of the pupils’
experiences. In order to improve pupil achievement, certain areas need to be addressed,
including composing and solving practical problems, developing estimation skills and
computation skills, and reinforcing concepts through regular linking of the various strands
of the curriculum.

• The quality of provision in History is generally satisfactory. The majority of pupils
demonstrate appropriate understanding of what has been learned. Certain practices are
commended including, exploring personal history, the use of storytelling, the emphasis
placed on local history, development of an understanding of chronology and the
development of research and investigation skills. These good practices should be
implemented systematically throughout the school. It is also recommended that more
regular opportunities be provided for pupils to work as historians and that they be given
more worthwhile opportunities to explore themes more deeply.

• In general, the quality of assessment is fair. Standardised testing is carried out as
appropriate. Individual teachers employ various methods of assessment and they keep
occasional records of pupil learning. However, there are differences in the quality of
monitoring carried out on pupils’ written work as well as in the quality of the feedback
provided. It is now recommended that an assessment policy be developed which will
incorporate the assessment strategies recommended in the curriculum and in the
guidelines from the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, Assessment in the
Primary School Curriculum: Guidelines for Primary Schools. In particular, it is
recommended that the results of the assessment be used more systematically to cater for
the different levels in pupil ability.

6. Quality of Support for Pupils

• Certain aspects of provision for pupils with special educational needs are commended
although much still needs to be developed. A supportive relationship exists between the
learning support teachers and the pupils and a positive learning environment is created.
Good use is made of a range of teaching strategies in the various support settings.
Certain features of planning are effective and progress in aspects of learning is in
evidence for particular pupils. However, assessment results should be used to inform the
development of education plans for individual pupils and for groups of pupils. There
should be a clear link between learning plans, short-term plans and learning activities and
systematic assessment of the achievement of learning targets should take place. It is also
recommended that a whole school approach to the long-term maintenance of pertinent
learning records be established. Although shared teaching can be effective in
mainstream classrooms, it would be worthwhile to systematically review the effect of this
approach on pupil progress and achievement.

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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 board of management of Gaelscoil Inis Córthaidh wishes to thank the inspectors for their cooperation and for the support shown. We are delighted that our strengths were recognised. The board, staff and parents’ committee are working together to implement the 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

- An action plan had been developed by the school to implement the recommendations on curriculum.

- A comprehensive assessment policy is being developed.

- The school’s board of management and parents’ committee are collaborating to develop a policy on communications and planning.