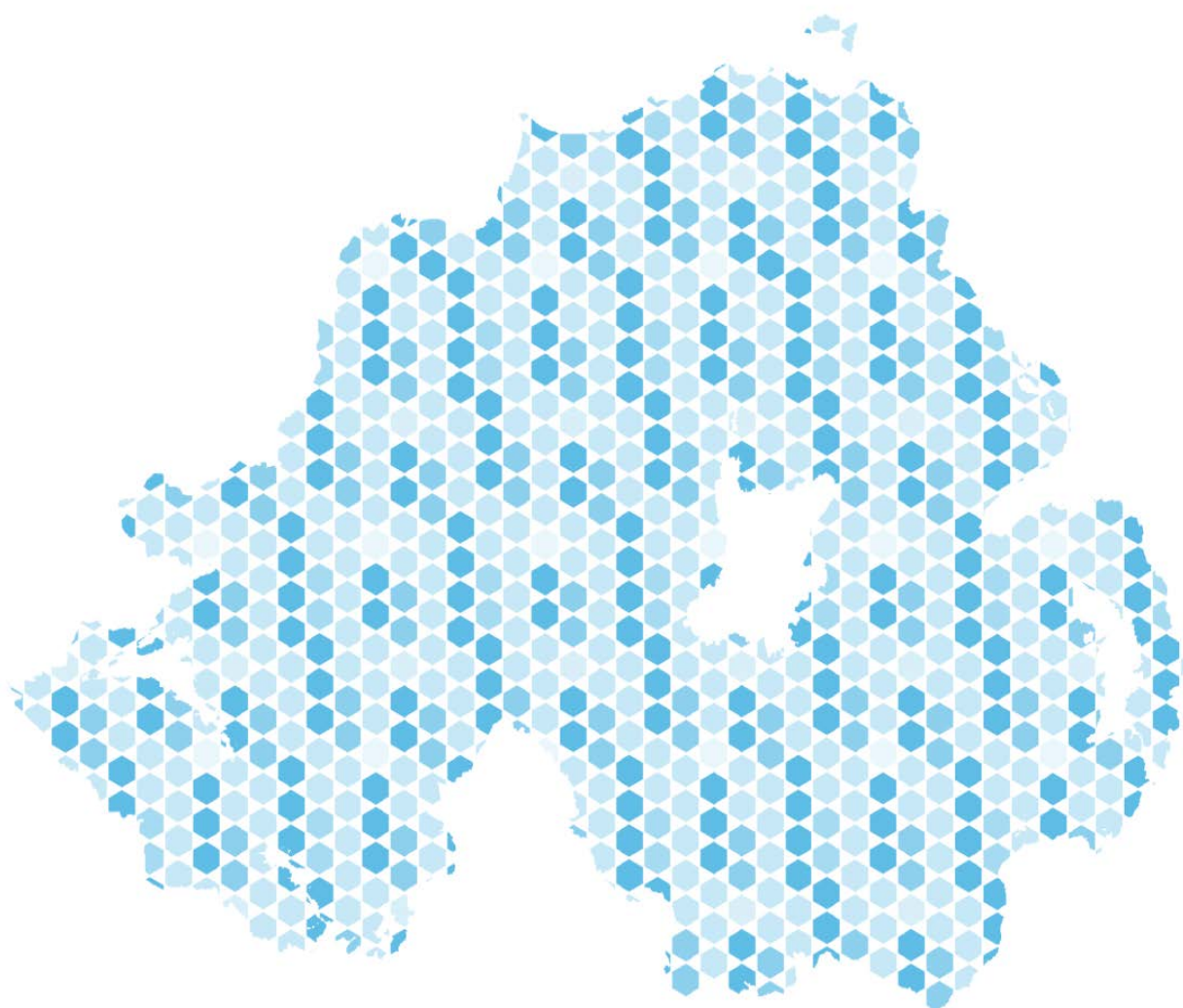


PRIMARY INSPECTION 2014-15



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Naíscoil agus Gaelscoil Éadain
Mhóir, Derry

Report of an Inspection in
October 2014

Quantitative terms

In this report, proportions may be described as percentages, common fractions and in more general quantitative terms. Where more general terms are used, they should be interpreted as follows:

Almost/nearly all	-	more than 90%
Most	-	75%-90%
A majority	-	50%-74%
A significant minority	-	30%-49%
A minority	-	10%-29%
Very few/a small number	-	less than 10%

Performance levels

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) use the following performance levels in reports:

DESCRIPTOR
Outstanding
Very Good
Good
Satisfactory
Inadequate
Unsatisfactory

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1. Inspection method and evidence base

The key questions and quality indicators which guide inspection and self-evaluation of primary schools, which were applied to this inspection, are available in the Education and Training Inspectorate's (ETI) publication *Together Towards Improvement: a process for self-evaluation* at: <http://www.etini.gov.uk/index/together-towards-improvement/together-towards-improvement-primary.htm>.

Inspectors observed teaching and learning, scrutinised documentation and the children's written work and held formal and informal discussions with children, teachers and staff with specific responsibilities.

The arrangements for this inspection included:

- a meeting with a representative from the governors;
- meetings with groups of children; and
- the opportunity for the parents, teaching and support staff to complete a confidential questionnaire.

Forty-two percent of parents responded to the questionnaires and 47% of staff (teaching and non-teaching) questionnaires were received. The responses to both the parental and staff questionnaires were positive about almost all aspects of the life and work of the school; in particular, the responses praised the inclusive and pastoral ethos throughout the school and nursery unit and the quality of the provision for children who require additional support with aspects of their learning. No significant issues were raised and ETI has reported to the principal and a representative of the board of governors the messages emerging from the questionnaires.

2. Focus of inspection

The inspection focused on:

1. the children's achievements and standards in literacy and numeracy, in particular, how the school is addressing low attainment and underachievement where applicable;
2. the quality of provision in the school and the nursery unit; and
3. the quality of leadership and management.

3. Context

Naíscoil and Gaelscoil Éadain Mhóir are situated in the Brandywell area of Derry city. The enrolment of the school currently stands at 110 children in the primary school (Gaelscoil Éadain Mhóir) and 28 in the nursery unit (Naíscoil Éadain Mhóir). Most of the children attending the school come from the surrounding Triax¹ area, which includes the Brandywell, Bogside and Creggan and Westland. The school has identified 28% of the children as requiring additional support with aspects of their learning and approximately 53% of the children are entitled to free school meals.

¹ Triax is the Neighbourhood Partnership Board for the Bogside, Brandywell, Creggan, Fountain and Bishop Street areas of Derry, recognised by the North West Development Office of the Department for Social Development.

Gaelscoil Éadain Mhóir	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Enrolment	129	114	117	110
% Attendance (NI Average)	93.1	92.3	92.5	-
FSME Percentage ²	50.4	47.4	48.7	53
% of children on SEN register	36.4	45.6	42.2	36.4
No. of children with statements of educational needs	*	*	*	*
No. of newcomers	-	-	-	*

Source: data as held by the school.

* Fewer than 5

4. Overall findings of the inspection

Overall Performance Level	Satisfactory
Achievements and Standards	Satisfactory
Provision	Satisfactory
Leadership and Management	Satisfactory
Nursery Unit	Very Good

5. Achievements and standards

- Throughout the school the children, are well-behaved and most are keen to learn. They are respectful of their teachers, listen well in class and most complete the learning tasks that the teachers set for them. When provided with stimulating and appropriately differentiated learning activities, the children become more actively engaged in their learning and demonstrate independence and flexibility in their learning and thinking. Almost all of the children speak fluently in Irish throughout the school and interact confidently, in both Irish and English, with each other and with staff and visitors.
- The school's performance data shows that a majority of children make progress in English, Irish and mathematics in line with their ability; a minority make progress above expectation. The children who require additional support with aspects of their learning participate confidently in all aspects of school life and almost all of them make good progress and meet their individual learning targets.
- The children achieve satisfactory standards in literacy; they complete the comprehension and grammar-based written tasks set for them and, in a minority of the classes, are beginning to develop their creative and personal writing; the standard of presentation is good in a majority of the children's books. The children's spoken Irish is a strength throughout the school and, when given appropriate opportunities, almost all of them use Irish consistently in their interactions with each other and with their teachers. By year 7, the most able children are able to read with a good level of fluency and expression, in both Irish and English, and write well across a range of genres. The standards achieved by the children in mathematics are satisfactory; most of them engage well in their

² The term 'FSME Percentage' refers to the percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals.

mental mathematics activities and are beginning to use mathematical terminology in Irish with increasing confidence and accuracy. By the end of key stage (KS) 2, the most able children are knowledgeable in the majority of the areas of the mathematics curriculum and can explain their strategies.

- The children in the nursery unit are very well-settled for the time of year and are making very good progress in all aspects of their learning and development. They spend sustained periods of time concentrating on tasks with confidence and independence. The children participate fully in well-managed song, rhyme and story sessions and show imagination and creativity in their use of materials at the art and construction areas. They readily engage in play with others and can talk to the staff about their work and learning experiences. All of the children show a very good understanding of the spoken Irish and a small number are beginning to use the language naturally in their play.
- The children use information and communication technology (ICT) effectively to enhance and display their learning across the curriculum.

6. Provision

- There is an agreed whole-school approach to planning for all areas of the curriculum which provides satisfactory guidance for the teachers. There is a need for almost all of the teachers to plan more effectively for the needs and abilities of the individual children within their classes and to ensure there is sufficient progression and challenge in the learning for all of the children. Although the teachers are evaluating their planning, only a minority of the evaluations are focused on the children's learning and used effectively to inform future planning and practice. Almost all of the teachers mark the children's work regularly and positively, and in the best practice, take account of the children's own evaluations of their learning and provide guidance to the children on how to improve their work.
- In the most effective practice observed, the lessons were stimulating and well-structured with an appropriate pace for learning. There was a clear focus on the learning and the teachers used effective immersion strategies and questioning to stimulate the children's thinking and their sense of enquiry. The immersion experience for the children was enhanced further during the period of outdoor play each day at break time when the teachers acted as effective language role models for the children. In the less effective practice, in the majority of the lessons observed, the teachers held low expectations for the children's learning; there was a focus on the completion of low-level, routine, decontextualised tasks and worksheets; and there was insufficient differentiation to meet the needs of all of the children, particularly the more able. In these classes, over-direction by the teacher restricted the opportunities for the children to develop their language and self-management skills; to work collaboratively together in pairs and small groups; and to take appropriate responsibility for their own learning.
- The quality of the provision for special educational needs is good. The children who require additional support with aspects of their learning are identified early through, for example, the close links with the nursery unit, teacher observations and the analysis of a range of internal assessment data. The individual education plans are clearly focused on the individual needs of the children and effective interventions and strategies are planned to support the children in their learning. In the most effective practice, these plans guide well the learning and teaching in the classrooms.

- The school has appropriately identified reading as an area for improvement and has introduced a number of interventions, including Reading Partners and Accelerated Reader, to support the children with their reading; all of the children who have been involved have made progress in their reading. Although there is a whole-school framework for the teaching of a wide range of genres in writing, there is insufficient time spent on developing the children's writing skills and, in almost all of the classes, the children are not provided with enough opportunities to develop and extend their creative and personal writing. The teachers are currently piloting a new approach to the teaching of both Irish and English which involves short, teacher-led lessons focused on linguistic form. The staff have identified appropriately the need to review this approach.
- There is a whole-school overview for mathematics which ensures the coverage of all areas of the mathematics curriculum across the key stages; short-term planners ensure that each area is revisited regularly during the year. The teachers use well the mental mathematics sessions at the beginning of the lessons to develop the children's flexibility and mathematical language. Throughout the school, the teachers need to broaden their teaching approaches in mathematics to link the children's learning experiences more effectively to real life situations and, where appropriate, to connect their learning more effectively across other areas of the curriculum.
- The attractive, stimulating and strong immersion learning environment provided in the nursery unit promotes effectively the children's Irish language development, decision making and self-management skills. The very good quality of the staff interactions with the children ensure that the opportunities for learning through the play, daily routines and group story sessions are exploited fully.
- The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care in the school and nursery unit is a strength. There is a welcoming, caring and inclusive ethos evident throughout the school. The children are proud of their school and they show care and respect for one another and for the staff. The culture of the school ensures that all of the children are listened to by the staff which is evidenced by, for example, the work of the school council, eco-council and buddy system.
- The school and nursery unit give very good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity thereby encouraging the children to adopt healthy lifestyles.

7. Leadership and management

- The leadership team has a strategic collegial approach to school improvement which is child-centred and focused on raising further the standards achieved by all of the children. Appropriate areas for development have been identified through a process of self-evaluation, including the analysis of a range of internal assessment data and consultation with the whole school community. It will be important that the leadership team now develops a rigorous process for monitoring and evaluating the impact of the action plans on the learning and teaching and on the outcomes for all of the children.

- The nursery unit staff work very effectively as a team and are highly reflective in their work; the processes for self-evaluation and continuous improvement are developing well. The very good links established by the nursery unit with 'Sure Start' ensure progression in the children's learning.
- The school and nursery unit have effective links with the parents who are well informed about their children's progress and the life and work of the school through, for example, school newsletters, the use of social media and the informative school website. There are regular opportunities for the children to participate in the local feiseanna, drama competitions and sporting tournaments. There are very effective links with the local and wider community, including the local pre-school settings and post-primary schools, which enhance further the children's learning.
- Based on the evidence presented at the time of inspection, ETI's evaluation is that there can be confidence in the aspects of governance evaluated. The governors are actively involved in the school development planning process and provide a challenge function in relation to achievements and standards, finance and the curriculum.
- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the school has comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education. In discussions with the inspectors, the children reported that they felt very secure in school and knew what to do if they had any concerns about their well-being.

8. Conclusion

In most of the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this school is satisfactory; the strengths outweigh areas for improvement in the provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement in leadership and management, in standards and in the learning and teaching, which need to be addressed if the needs of all the children are to be met more effectively.

The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor and report on the school's progress in addressing the areas for improvement over a 12-24 month period.

The areas for improvement include the need to:

- ensure consistency of best practice in learning and teaching for all the children;
- raise further the standards in literacy and numeracy; and
- develop a more rigorous process for monitoring and evaluating the children's learning experiences.

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