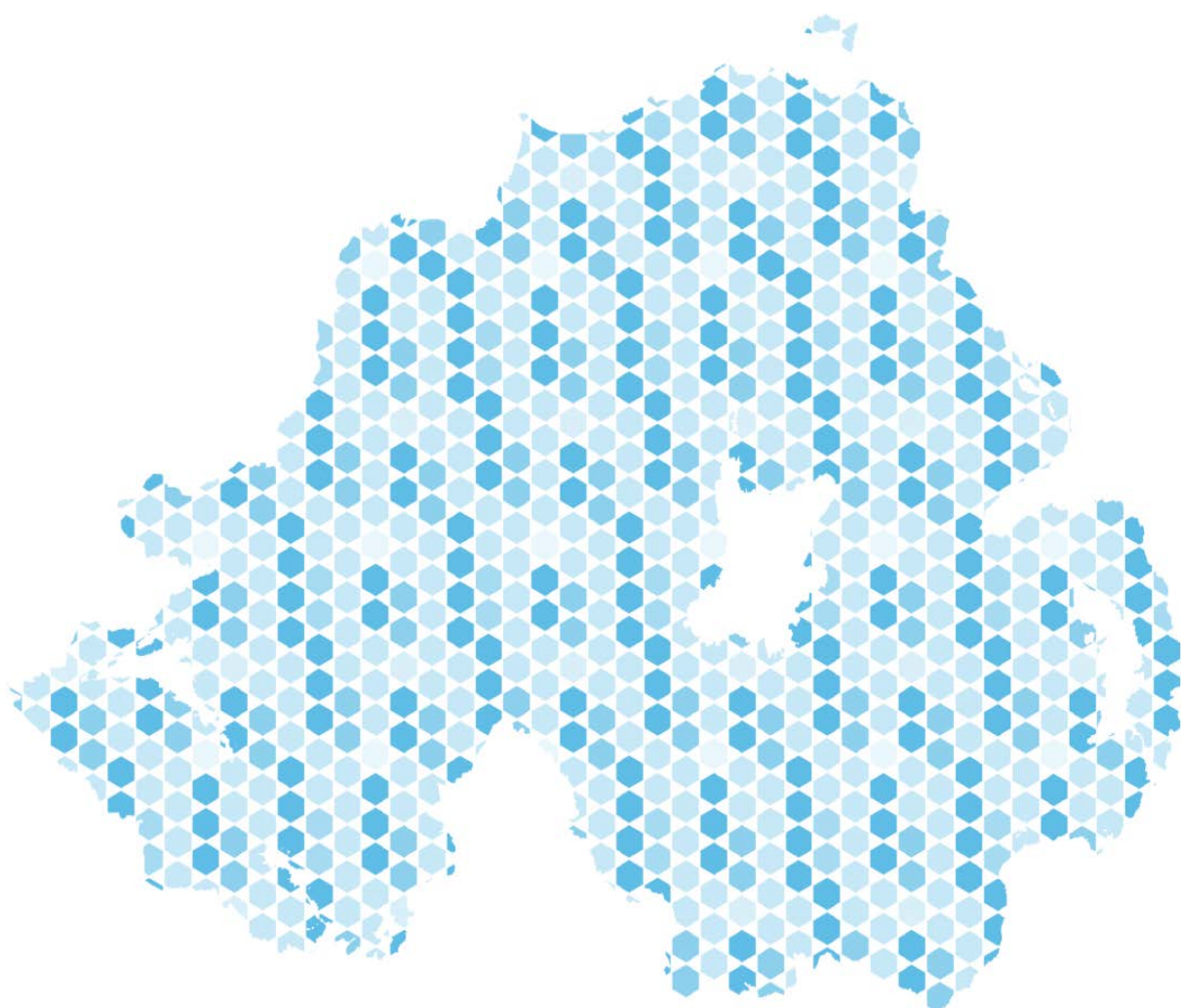


PRIMARY INSPECTION 2014-15



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Scoil an Droichid, Belfast

Report of an Inspection in
June 2015



*The Education and Training Inspectorate -
Promoting Improvement*

Providing Inspection Services for

Department of Education
Department for Employment and Learning
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

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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

Contents

Section	Page
1. Inspection method and evidence base	1
2. Focus of inspection	1
3. Context	1
4. Overall findings of the inspection	2
5. Achievements and standards	2
6. Provision	3
7. Leadership and management	5
8. Conclusion	6
Appendix	

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.eti.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.

Ten percent of parents and just over 80% of staff (teaching and non-teaching) responded to the questionnaires. The responses to the parental questionnaires indicated very high levels of satisfaction with the life and work of the school and naíscoil. In particular, the parents highlighted their appreciation of the teachers' and support staff's work, the nurturing culture within the school and the high quality relationships and rapport between staff and parents. The responses to the staff questionnaires were also very positive; they highlighted the positive pastoral ethos of the school, the quality of the working relationships across the school and the links with the parents and wider community. ETI has reported to the Principal and a representative of the board of governors the small number of issues emerging from the questionnaires and the discussions.

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 naíscoil; and
3. the quality of leadership and management.

3. Context

Scoil an Droichid is situated in the Lower Ormeau area of South Belfast. Over the past five years the school's enrolment has increased steadily to its current enrolment of 125 in the primary school and 28 in the naíscoil. Almost all of the children come from the Lower Ormeau, Short Strand and Greater Belfast areas. At the time of the inspection 64% of the children in the primary school and naíscoil were entitled to free school meals (FSM) and 41% of the children had been identified by the school as requiring additional support with aspects of their learning.

Scoil an Droichid	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Enrolment	118	120	131	125
% Attendance (NI Average)	93.8	93.1	93.7	93.8
FSME Percentage ¹	56.6	68.5	66	64
% (No) of children on SEN register	24.5	34.2	34	36.4
No. of children with statements of educational needs	*	*	*	*
No. of newcomers	0	0	0	0

Source: data as held by the school.

* fewer than 5

4. Overall findings of the inspection

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

5. Achievements and standards

- Throughout the school, the children are well-behaved, confident and positively disposed to learning. Almost all of the children demonstrate high levels of motivation and, when given appropriate opportunities, show independence and flexibility in their learning and thinking. They work effectively both individually and collaboratively, in pairs and small groups, and develop well their interpersonal and communication skills as they engage enthusiastically in the weekly opportunities to support their peers in different classes.
- The school's internal performance data shows that most children, including those who require additional help with aspects of their learning, progress well in English, Irish and mathematics in line with their ability or above expectation.
- Overall, the standards achieved by the children in mathematics are good; they have appropriate knowledge and understanding of key mathematical concepts and can apply their mathematical skills in meaningful situations. The children engaged well in and demonstrated an enjoyment of the range of mathematics activities planned for them during numeracy lessons. By year 7, the most able children can apply competently a range of strategies and explain their thinking with confidence using the correct mathematical language; they also demonstrate flexible thinking in problem-solving and problem-posing tasks.

¹ The term 'FSME Percentage' refers to the percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals.

- Across the key stages, the children demonstrate very good talking and listening skills, in both Irish and English, contributing to group and class discussions and presenting to their peers with increasing confidence. From foundation stage, the children develop their ability to write independently in Irish and almost all present their work to a good standard. By Year 7, the children produce pieces of extended writing in both Irish and English for a range of purposes and audiences, including reports, letters, procedural, persuasive and creative writing. The most able children read with fluency, understanding and expression in Irish and English. In discussions about their reading, they are able to empathise, to make inferences and predictions and to express and justify their views on the literature they read in class. They talk enthusiastically about the fiction and non-fiction books which they read for pleasure in English.
- The children in the naíscoil are well settled and have made good progress in all areas of the pre-school programme; their representational drawing and artwork is of a high standard. During free-play, the children spend sustained periods of time concentrating on tasks of their choice with confidence, perseverance and independence and are developing effective social skills and friendships as they play with each other in pairs and small groups. The children's behaviour is very good at all times. All of the children show a very good understanding of the Irish spoken to them and a small number are beginning to use the language naturally in their play.

6. Provision

- There is a whole-school approach to planning across all learning areas which guides the teachers appropriately in delivering a broad, balanced and well-connected curriculum. The short-term planning is thorough and detailed and is evaluated regularly by each individual teacher. In the best practice, the evaluations are suitably focused on the learning that has taken place and are used to inform appropriately the future provision in order to meet the needs of all children. The teachers mark the children's work positively and, where marking is most effective, the teachers take account of the children's own evaluations of their learning and provide helpful guidance to the children on how to improve their work. This practice needs to be embedded further across all classes. The classroom assistants support the children very well in their learning across the key stages.
- In the most effective practice, the lessons observed were well planned, had good pace and progression and were differentiated appropriately to meet the range of individual needs within the classroom; ICT resources were used effectively by the teachers to support and enhance the learning and teaching. There was a clear focus on the learning during these lessons and the teachers used effective immersion strategies and skilful questioning to stimulate the children's thinking and to build upon their prior learning.
- The children who require additional support with aspects of their learning are identified early through teacher observations and the analysis of a range of internal assessment data; they are supported very well within and outside the classroom. There is a collegial approach throughout the school and naíscoil to meet the needs of all of the children, which includes the effective and important, contribution the learning support assistants make to the children's learning and well-being. The progress the children make in their learning is monitored and evaluated regularly to ensure progression and to reduce barriers to further progress and achievement.

- The children's enjoyment of and competence in reading develops well through the use of appropriate reading schemes and, at key stage 2 (KS2), through the detailed study of stories and novels in both languages. The school's 'Liosta Cliste' promotes systematically the teaching of spelling and the effective genre map for writing ensures that the children are provided with opportunities to develop their writing for a range of purposes across the key stages. Beyond the classroom, the development of the children's reading and writing is further supported by a range of extra-curricular events with a language and literacy focus; for example, the celebration of 'Languages Week' and 'World Book Day'.
- The teachers provide a supportive and stimulating learning environment for numeracy. In all key stages, the children experience a balanced coverage of number, shape and space, measures and data-handling. Mental mathematics activities are used as an enjoyable introduction to lessons throughout the school to consolidate the children's previous learning and to promote their use of the associated mathematical language. In the foundation stage (FS), mathematical concepts and ideas are integrated well through play activities. As the children progress through the school there are more opportunities for appropriate investigative-type work which challenges the children to explain their mathematical thinking and understanding and to connect their learning across other areas of the curriculum. It will be important that the best practice in mathematics should be identified and disseminated to help ensure more consistency in the provision across the key stages.
- The play programme in the naíscoil is well-balanced and provides good to very good opportunities for learning across all areas of the pre-school curriculum. A particular strength is the provision for play in the outdoor learning environment and the attention given to developing the children's interest and curiosity in their immediate surroundings. The organisation of the day needs to be reviewed, however, to provide the children with sufficient opportunities to engage in energetic play and to ensure an appropriate balance between free play and the more teacher-led activities. The positive relationships at all levels foster an inclusive and settled ethos in the naíscoil. The staff are caring and supportive in their approach at all times; they know the children well and the quality of their interactions with the children is consistently of a good or very good standard. The high quality immersion environment is a particular feature of the provision in the naíscoil and supports the children well in their acquisition and development of the Irish language; the teacher-in-charge is an effective linguistic role model for both the staff and the children. The children who require additional support with aspects of their learning and development are supported very effectively in the naíscoil; their needs are identified early and their progress is monitored regularly and used to inform weekly planning. The staff should develop a more strategic approach to observing, recording and assessing the learning and development, for all of the children, in order to provide clear evidence of their progress across all areas of the pre-school curriculum and to inform better future planning.

- The quality of the provision for pastoral care is a strength in the school and naíscóil. It is underpinned by a warm, inclusive ethos and a strong sense of belonging. The children's development is supported by an effective preventative curriculum and a progressive approach to behaviour management, which promotes their self-awareness and helps them learn to resolve differences through effective communication. Through KS2 'Buddies' and the pupil council, the children undertake leadership roles, support each other in their learning and contribute to the improvement of their school. The school's rewards system shares and celebrates the children's successes appropriately.
- The school and naíscóil gives good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity, through both the taught curriculum and the range of extra-curricular sporting activities, which encourage the children to adopt healthy lifestyles.

7. Leadership and management

- The senior leadership team is committed to the pastoral and academic needs of all the children and has developed successfully a culture and ethos of collegiality throughout the school. The current school development plan provides an overview of the key priorities for school improvement and has been informed to some degree by consultation and an analysis of performance data. However, it lacks sufficient rigour and a clear understanding of the importance of robust self-evaluation in order to effect improvement at all levels.
- The co-ordinators have worked hard to upskill themselves and lead effectively in their respective areas of responsibility. They have developed individual action plans which highlight appropriate priorities for improvement and include arrangements for monitoring and evaluating. It will be important that the systems in place to monitor and evaluate the provision, across the curricular areas, are developed further to ensure that all actions impact on the learning and lead to improvement in the standards achieved by all children.
- The staff in the naíscóil work very effectively as a team and, under the guidance and support of the teacher-in-charge, have managed successfully to provide for the children a continuous and effective pre-school experience, in spite of a number of challenges and re-locations during the year.
- There are effective links with parents and the community. The teachers recognise and foster the contribution of families and the wider community to the children's learning. Families are welcomed to share in their children's education through regular 'Play and Stay' mornings in the naíscóil and foundation stage and a significant number have worked closely with the school in the 'Families and Schools Together' (FAST) project. These experiences have successfully engaged families in learning, raised confidence and aspirations and have assisted them in supporting their children. Throughout the school, the children benefit from enriching cultural and citizenship experiences, including musical and literary events, science and home economics classes with the main post-primary partner and collaborative work with the children from a local special school.

- Based on the evidence presented at the time of the inspection, the ETI's evaluation is that there can be confidence in the aspects of governance evaluated. The Board of Governors are committed to the school. They have promoted successfully the school within the community and have managed effectively a number of particularly challenging situations over recent years. They have identified appropriately the need to engage more regularly with the key co-ordinators and subject leaders to inform them about progress against the school development plan.
- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the school has satisfactory arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements reflect broadly the guidance issued by the Department of Education. It will be important that the relevant policies are reviewed at strategic level to provide staff with an appropriate point of reference and to promote coherence and consistency. In discussions with the inspectors, the children reported that they felt safe in school and knew what to do if they had any concerns about their well-being.

8. Conclusion

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this school is good. The school has important strengths in most of its educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified the following area for improvement which the school has demonstrated the capacity to address.

- To develop a more strategic approach to self-evaluation at all levels in order to inform more effectively the process of school development planning leading to improvement.

The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor, through district inspection activity, the school's progress on the area for improvement.

APPENDIX

Health and safety

1. The perimeter fence needs to be extended to prevent access to the school from the adjacent premises.

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