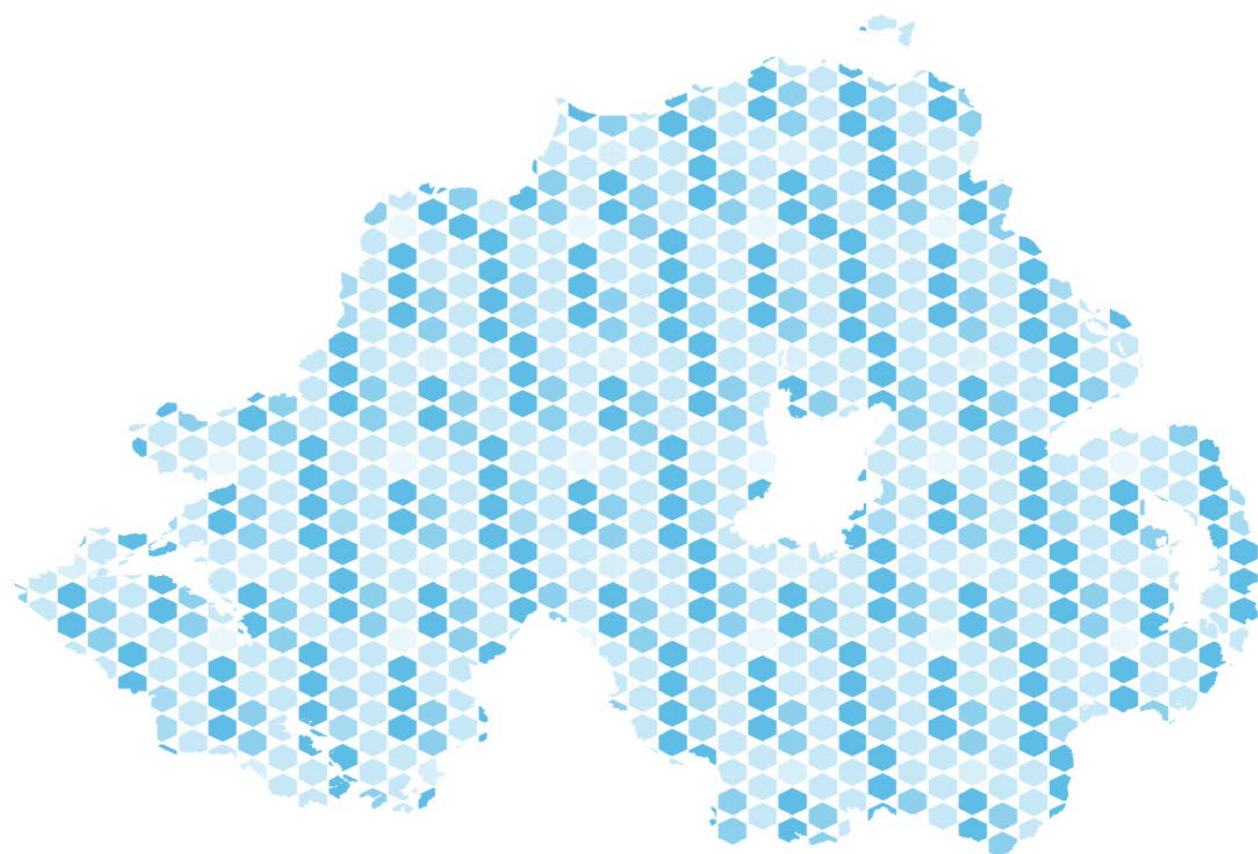


# PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

Gaelscoil na bhFál,  
Béal Feirste/Belfast

Controlled, co-educational

Report of an Inspection (Involving  
Action Short of Strike) in  
November 2017



The Education and Training Inspectorate  
Promoting Improvement

Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education  
Department for the Economy  
and other commissioning Departments



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## INTRODUCTION

### 1. Context

Gaelscoil na bhFál, is an Irish-medium primary school, situated off the Falls Road in Belfast. Almost all of the children come from the immediate area. The enrolment in the school has increased steadily in the past four years. Over the same period, the percentage of children identified as requiring additional support with aspects of their learning has decreased by nine percentage points to 30%. A new principal was appointed last year. Since then, the roles and responsibilities of the leadership at all levels have been reviewed and restructured, including the appointment of a new vice-principal and key co-ordinators.

Four of the teaching unions which make up the Northern Ireland Teachers' Council (NITC) have declared industrial action primarily in relation to a pay dispute. This includes non-co-operation with the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI). Prior to the inspection, the school informed the ETI that none of the teachers would be co-operating with the inspectors in relation to lesson observations; however, co-ordinators met with the inspectors regarding their areas of responsibility. The ETI has a statutory duty to monitor, inspect and report on the quality of education under Article 102 of the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986. Therefore, the inspection proceeded and the following evaluations are based on the evidence as made available at the time of the inspection.

Gaelscoil na bhFál	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Enrolment	158	162	167	172
% Attendance	96.1	95.9	96.3	97.2
% NI Primary school average	95.4	95.5	N/A	N/A
FSME Percentage <sup>1</sup>	53.2	48.8	46.7	53.5
No. of children on SEN register	39	37	36	30
% of children on SEN register	24.7	22.8	21.6	17.4
No. of children with statements of educational needs	6	6	6	5
No. of newcomers	0	0	0	0

**Source:** data as held by the school.

N/A not available

### 2. Views of parents and staff

Eleven percent of parents and 46% of the staff responded to the confidential, online questionnaires. The responses to the parental questionnaire were positive and the written comments indicated high levels of satisfaction with almost all aspects of the life and work of the school, and in particular, the parents highlighted the positive learning experiences that the school provides for their children. The responses to the staff questionnaire were wholly positive and endorsed the new school leadership structures and the collegial working environment. The ETI has communicated to the principal and the chair of the board of governors the main findings, and any individual issues arising, from the questionnaires.

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<sup>1</sup> The term 'FSME Percentage' refers to the percentage of children entitled to free school meals.

### 3. Focus of the inspection

The ETI was unable to evaluate:

- outcomes for children with a particular focus on numeracy and literacy;
- quality of provision with a particular focus on numeracy and literacy including across the curriculum; and
- quality of leadership and management.

Where it has been possible to evaluate aspects of the foci, they are reported below.

### 4. Overall findings of the inspection

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Unable to assure of the quality of education
<b>Outcomes for learners</b>	No performance level available
<b>Quality of provision</b>	No performance level available
<b>Leadership and management</b>	No performance level available

## KEY FINDINGS

### 5. Outcomes for learners

- A group of children from year seven read with the inspectors in Irish and English. They read fluently and with understanding in both languages and talked enthusiastically about their personal reading preferences. Inspectors also met with a group of year seven children who demonstrated good levels of understanding and flexibility in their mathematical thinking, using appropriate mathematical language in Irish with confidence.

The ETI was unable to evaluate fully:

- the learning outcomes for the children;
- progression in the children's learning; and
- the children's wider skills and dispositions.

### 6. Quality of provision

The ETI was unable to evaluate:

- the quality of the curriculum;
- the effectiveness of the guidance and support in bringing about high quality individual learning experiences;
- the effectiveness and impact of planning, teaching, learning and assessment in promoting successful learning; and
- care and welfare.

## **7. Leadership and management**

- The priorities in the school development plan have been appropriately identified through consultation within the school community and through the school's own self-evaluation processes. Associated action plans to promote school improvement have been put in place. While these plans address key areas for improvement, the targets are not sufficiently focused on the children's experiences and outcomes.
- Roles and responsibilities throughout the school have been clearly defined with an emphasis on building the capacity of leadership at all levels.
- The governors are highly committed to the work and life of the school and they play a pro-active role in the school improvement process. They have supported and challenged effectively the recently appointed principal in the restructuring of the school's leadership teams. They are identifying opportunities to engage directly with the key co-ordinators to inform them about progress against the school's action plans.

The ETI was unable to evaluate fully:

- the effectiveness of strategic leadership and governance;
- the effectiveness and impact of middle leadership; and
- the effectiveness of action to promote and sustain improvement.

## **8. Safeguarding**

- During the inspection, the school provided evidence that the arrangements for safeguarding children reflect broadly the guidance from the Department of Education. There is a need to review aspects of the school's programme for personal development and mutual understanding, and in particular, elements of the preventative curriculum. Owing to the action short of strike, the ETI was unable to evaluate fully, the outworking of the arrangements for safeguarding in the school.
- In discussions with the inspectors, the children in year 6 spoke positively about the friendly working relationships they have with staff and one another, and how they value the opportunities to participate in the extra-curricular activities provided by the school. They reported that they feel safe and are aware of what to do if they have any concerns about their safety or welfare.

## **9. Overall effectiveness**

Owing to the impact of the action short of strike being taken by the staff, the ETI is unable to assure parents/carers, the wider school community and stakeholders of the quality of education being provided for the children. This will be reflected in future inspection activity.

### Inspection methodology and evidence base

The ETI's Inspection and Self-Evaluation Framework is available on the ETI website: [The Inspection and Self-Evaluation Framework \(ISEF\): Effective Practice and Self-Evaluation Questions for Primary | Education Training Inspectorate](#)

Inspectors observe learning and teaching, scrutinise documentation and the children's written work and hold formal and informal discussions with children, teachers and staff with specific responsibilities.

The arrangements for inspection include:

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

Where, owing to the action short of strike, this evidence base was not available, it has been referenced in the body of the inspection report.

The arrangements for this inspection included:

- meetings with the principal, co-ordinators and representatives from the board of governors regarding the school development planning process, school improvement work and safeguarding;
- meetings with groups of year 6 and 7 children; and
- an opportunity to read documentation presented as supporting evidence pertaining to the school development plan and safeguarding.

## Reporting terms used by the Education and Training Inspectorate

### 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 ETI use the following performance levels when reporting on outcomes for learners, quality of provision and leadership and management<sup>2</sup>:

Outstanding
Very good
Good
Important area(s) for improvement
Requires significant improvement
Requires urgent improvement

### Overall effectiveness

The ETI use one of the following inspection outcomes when evaluating the overall effectiveness of the school:

The school has a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor how the school sustains improvement.
The school demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor how the school sustains improvement.
The school needs to address (an) important area(s) for improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor and report on the school's progress in addressing the area(s) for improvement. There will be a formal follow-up inspection in 12 to 18 months.
The school needs to address urgently the significant areas for improvement identified in the interest of all the learners. It requires external support to do so. The ETI will monitor and report on the school's progress in addressing the areas for improvement. There will be a formal follow-up inspection in 18 to 24 months.

<sup>2</sup> And the overall provision in a unit, as applicable.

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