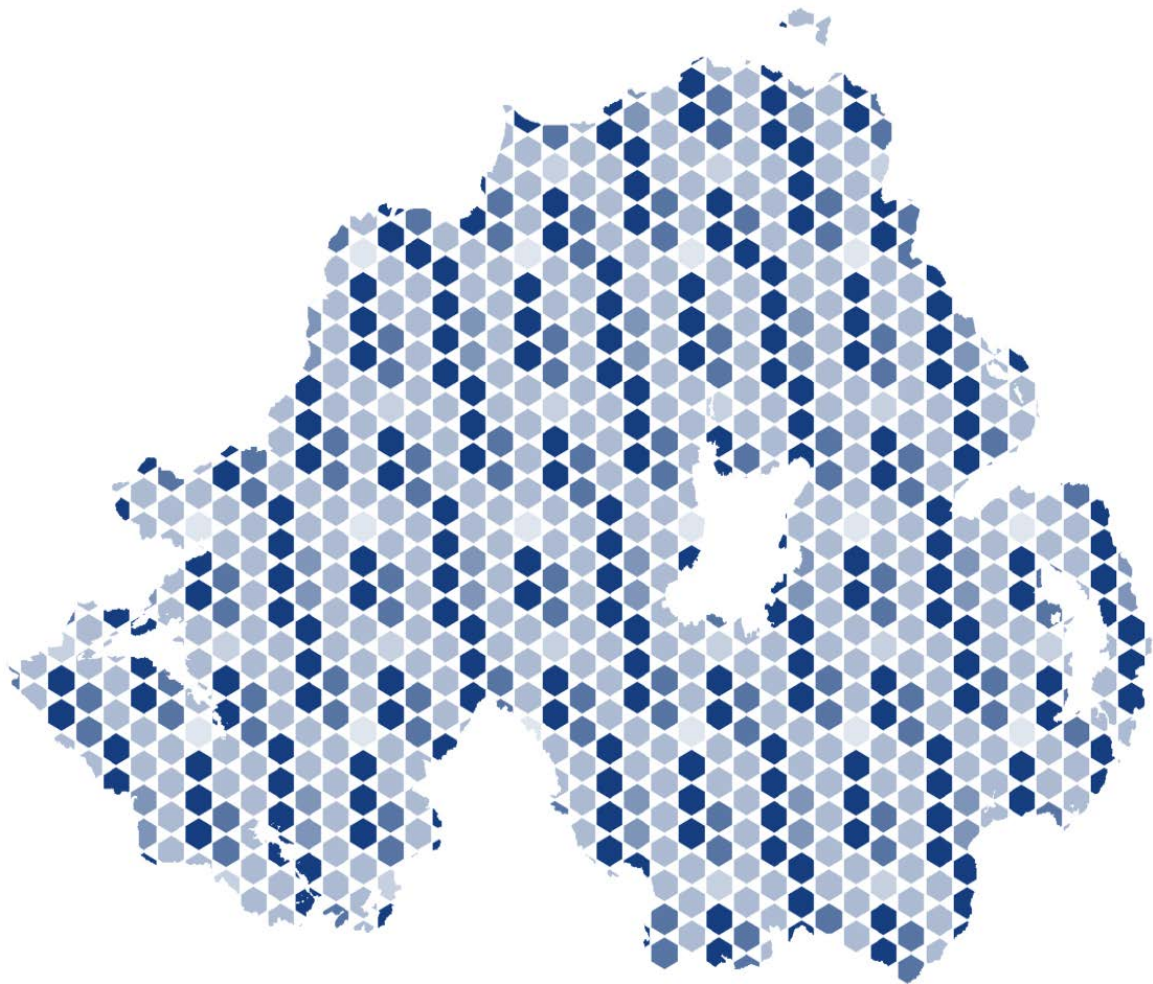


POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Gaelcholáiste Dhoire,
Dungiven, County Derry

Irish-medium, co-educational, non-selective, 11-19 school

Report of a Baseline Inspection in
November 2016



Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education
Department for the Economy
and other commissioning Departments



Quantitative terms used by the Education and Training Inspectorate

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 when reporting on Achievements and standards, on Provision for learning and on Leadership and management:

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.
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.

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1. Inspection method and evidence base

The key questions and quality indicators which guide inspection and self-evaluation of post-primary schools, which were applied to this inspection, are available in the ETI publication *Together Towards Improvement: a process for self-evaluation* at: <https://www.etini.gov.uk/publications/together-towards-improvement-post-primary>.

Inspectors observed learning and teaching, scrutinised documentation, data and the pupils' written work and held formal and informal discussions with pupils (individually and in groups), teachers and staff with specific responsibilities.

The arrangements for this inspection included a meeting with representatives from the governors and the opportunity for all parents, teaching and support staff to complete a confidential questionnaire.

Seventy-four percent of parents (32) and 56% of staff responded to the questionnaires. The large number of parents who responded to the questionnaires commented very positively on: the welcoming ethos of the school and in particular on the ease of transition for the pupils from their primary school; the high expectations, both academic and social; and the wide range of enrichment opportunities available to the pupils. The staff responses were wholly affirming of the work of the school; they commented on the very positive relationships at all levels, the high quality leadership and management and the inclusive and positive learning environment. Issues concerning the school's accommodation requirements raised in the parental questionnaires were discussed with the governors and principal.

2. Focus of inspection

In order to promote improvement in the interests of all pupils, the purpose of inspection is, through effective linking of internal and external approaches, to:

- evaluate the quality of the provision and the outcomes for the pupils;
- evaluate the school's leadership and management and its capacity to effect and sustain improvement in its provision and standards; and
- inform the school's planning for improvement.

3. Context

Gaelcholáiste Dhoire is a non-selective, multi-denominational, Irish-medium, co-educational school for 11-19 year old pupils. The school is situated in Dungiven Castle in the town of Dungiven, Co Derry. Gaelcholáiste Dhoire opened in September 2015 and is one of two fully-immersive post-primary schools in Northern Ireland. Enrolment currently stands at 48 pupils who have come from seven contributory Irish-medium primary schools, situated in rural county Derry, Derry city and Strabane.

The accommodation for learning and teaching currently comprises three classrooms and a multifunctional learning and dining area. Practical science and home economics classes are taught by Gaelcholáiste Dhoire staff in specialist rooms in St Patrick's College, Dungiven. The indoor and outdoor facilities in the adjacent community leisure centre are used for physical education classes. The current accommodation arrangements do not provide adequately for the projected growth of the school, nor are they fit for purpose for the delivery of the Northern Ireland curriculum in a fully-immersive Irish-medium post-primary school setting.

The school's budget allocation for the current financial year is based on the number of pupils in the first year of intake. Currently, three times that number of pupils attends the school and this has the potential to impact adversely on the availability of resources to support fully the pupils' learning.

Gaelcholáiste Dhoire	2015-16	2016-17
Year 8 Intake	16	32
Enrolment	16	48
% Attendance (NI Average)	96.9 (92.3)	N/A (N/A)
FSME Percentage ¹	12.5	18.8
% (No.) of pupils on the SEN register	31.25 (5)	25 (12)
No. of pupils with statements of educational need	0	0
No. of newcomers	0	0

Source: data as held by the school.
N/A not available

4. Overall findings of the inspection

Overall effectiveness	Capacity to identify and bring about improvement
Achievements and standards	Very good
Provision for learning	Good
Leadership and management	Very good

5. Achievements and standards

- The pupils are polite, courteous, respectful and very welcoming; their behaviour is exemplary. They are keen to learn and succeed and they set high expectations for themselves. Their interpersonal and communication skills are developed well through confident engagement in their learning, both inside and outside the classroom; they interact easily and willingly with their peers and adults. Almost all of the pupils demonstrate maturity in managing and reflecting on their work and can articulate clearly how they are progressing in their learning.
- Throughout the school, the pupils' literacy and numeracy skills are developing well. The pupils' use of Irish as the language of learning and social interaction is a significant strength of the school. They speak with increasing clarity, confidence and fluency as they progress through key stage 3 (KS3) and their extended writing demonstrates significant progression in the range and accuracy of their written Irish. The pupils skills in written and oral English are also developed to a high level. The pupils participate actively in investigative learning activities in their mathematics lessons using methods and procedures appropriately. In other subjects, when given the opportunity, they apply their numeracy skills to estimate, retrieve, interpret and draw conclusions from a range of data with increasing confidence.

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

- The pupils who require additional support with aspects of their learning are fully integrated into school life and make very good progress in the achievement of their individual targets.

6. Provision for learning

- Most of the lessons observed were effective (good or better) in promoting learning, with almost one-half being highly effective (very good to outstanding). The highly effective practice was characterised by well-planned learning experiences with real-life context and purpose, which enthused and challenged the pupils. In these lessons, the teachers built effectively upon prior learning, used skilful questioning to encourage the pupils to deepen and justify their thinking and provided meaningful opportunities for the pupils to collaborate in their learning. In the less effective practice (important areas for improvement), in a small number of the lessons observed, the planning did not meet the needs and abilities of all the pupils and was overly focused on the completion of activities. As a result, there was insufficient progress in learning.
- The teachers use an appropriate range of assessment techniques to support the pupils in their learning. They have good opportunities across the curriculum to develop their competence in self- and peer-assessment and the teachers provide regular, constructive and often detailed feedback on progress and how to further improve their work. The school continues to refine its use of assessment tools in Irish, English and mathematics, including standardised tests, in order to establish accurate baselines, to set appropriate targets for individual pupils and to monitor their progression in learning.
- Literacy in Irish and English is promoted well throughout the school. The teachers model spoken and written Irish of a consistently high quality, set high expectations for the pupils' linguistic development, and balance sensitively the development of fluency and precision in both Irish and English. The pupils' talking, listening and writing skills are developed well across the curriculum through appropriate opportunities to report and present to their peers and to wider audiences for a variety of purposes.
- There is a positive attitude to the use of mathematics across the curriculum and a high awareness of how numeracy enriches the learning opportunities in other subjects. Planning for the extension and consolidation of the pupils' mathematical learning is developing well and provides pupils with increasing opportunities to use and apply their mathematical knowledge. Teachers have taken responsibility to map this aspect of provision within their subjects in order to help inform future planning for improvement.
- A high priority is given to the provision of care and support for the pupils; the school has a welcoming, inclusive ethos and relationships for learning are positive and mutually respectful. The pupils benefit from a broad range of extra-curricular and enrichment opportunities, including sport, drama and music, which is in keeping with the school's vision of *'Dóchas sa dúchas' – 'Hope in our heritage'*. These experiences allow the pupils to develop their creativity, confidence and wider skills and dispositions and provide them with opportunities to compete against their peers in other schools. The pupils have a strong sense of ownership of, and pride in, their school; the pupil voice is valued and, through their emerging leadership roles, the pupils grow in confidence and make a

positive contribution to the school community. Effective communication with feeder primary schools, along with the school's internal procedures, ensures that the needs of pupils who require additional support with aspects of their learning are promptly identified and planned for. The school engages well with parents and is developing appropriately the contribution of the pupils to setting and reviewing their own targets for learning. As the school grows, the leadership continues to build the capacity of the staff to successfully meet the needs of all the pupils who require additional support.

- The school has worked innovatively to ensure the requirements of the KS 3 curriculum are met. This has involved robust recruitment processes and the continued development of staff to teach within new subject areas. There is an emphasis on the development of the pupils' wider skills and capabilities for life-long learning and for contributing effectively to society; this includes the local Irish speaking communities. The cross-curricular skills of communication, using maths and using information, communication and technology (ICT) are developing well across the curriculum and there are increasing opportunities for the pupils to transfer, apply and use these skills effectively in other contexts.

7. Leadership and management

- Through extensive consultation with the pupils, parents and staff, the school has identified appropriate priorities for development and improvement, notably in the promotion of leadership and management at all levels and a focus on creating and sustaining a highly effective Irish-medium immersion environment. These priorities are clearly articulated in the well-conceived school development plan² and are focused appropriately on high quality learning and teaching and on continuing to raise the standards attained by the pupils.
- Leadership at all levels has developed well since the establishment of the school. During this period, a clear vision which is focused appropriately on an understanding of pupils' needs, interests and abilities, has underpinned the direction of the school. A significant strength of the leadership of the school is the good attention given to providing well-conceived continuing professional development for staff which is linked to meeting to good effect the overall priorities identified in the school development plan. These include a range of appropriate capacity-building opportunities which support teachers in developing their practice within and beyond their specialist subject areas and in building further their leadership competence at subject and strategic level.
- The governors are highly committed to, and supportive of, the school. They have contributed fully to the creation of the vision and ethos which shapes the school and to the associated school development planning process. They continue to face and address, with conviction, the significant issues and challenges that surround the establishment of a fully immersive Irish-medium education post-primary school. The governors are a cohesive and energetic group, provide the school with a broad and complementary skill set and are well informed about the work of the school. They are actively involved in supporting and challenging the senior leadership of the school, in the best interests of all of the pupils. Based on the evidence presented at the time of inspection, the ETI's evaluation is that there can be high confidence in the aspects of governance evaluated.

² The school development plan meets the requirements of the School Development Planning Regulations (NI) 2010.

- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the school has comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding young people. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education. The pupils report that they feel safe and secure in school; they are aware of what to do if they have any concerns about their safety or well-being and are confident that any concerns are dealt with promptly.

8. Overall effectiveness

Gaelcholáiste Dhoire demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the learners.

The areas for improvement, which the school has demonstrated the capacity to address, are to:

- continue, as new roles and responsibilities emerge, to develop professional capacity; and
- refine further, as the school grows, planning and processes at all levels, in order to ensure consistent high quality learning experiences and outcomes for all of the pupils.

The ETI will monitor how the school sustains improvement.

Health and Safety

1. There are no viewing panels on the classroom doors.

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