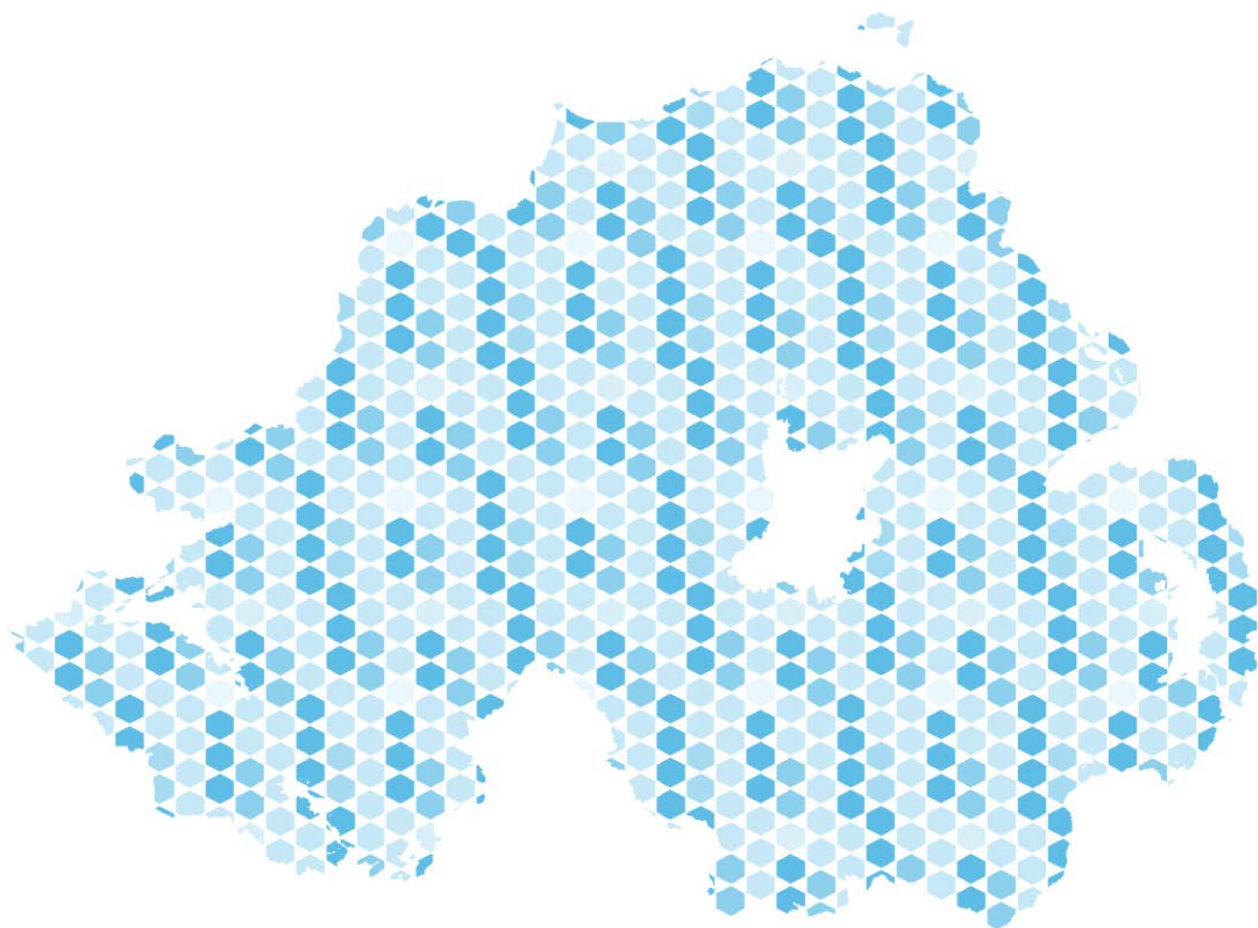


PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Bunscoil agus Naíscoil Bheann
Mhadagáin, Belfast

Irish-medium Primary School and Nursery Unit, co-educational

Report of an Inspection in
October 2016

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 primary schools, which were applied to this inspection, are available in the 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 learning and teaching, 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.

Fourteen percent of parents in the Bunscoil and Naíscoil and 58% of staff responded to the confidential questionnaire. The responses were very positive and indicated high levels of satisfaction with the life and work of the school. The parents highlighted their appreciation of the professional, dedicated and approachable staff. The naíscoil parents expressed gratitude for the support and information they receive through, for example, the monthly newsletter and the weekly parental song/rhyme session. The ETI has reported to the principal and a representative of the board of governors the findings of the confidential questionnaires.

2. Focus of inspection

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

- children's achievements and standards in literacy (Irish and English) and numeracy (including how the school is addressing low attainment and underachievement, where applicable);
- quality of provision for learning in the school, including the nursery unit; and
- quality of leadership and management.

3. Context

Bunscoil and Naíscoil Bheann Mhadagáin is an Irish-medium primary school, with a statutory full-time nursery unit, situated on the Cliftonville Road in North Belfast. Almost all of the children attending the school come from the surrounding areas of Ardoyne and the Cliftonville, Antrim and Cavehill Roads. At the time of the inspection, a number of teachers were new in post and key co-ordination roles had been assigned recently. The school was awaiting the completion of construction work so that it could embark on nurture provision, for which planning and preparation was already in place. The school moved into its new premises in January 2016.

Bunscoil agus Naíscoil Bheann Mhadadáin	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Enrolment	133	142	155	158
% School attendance	93.2	92.6	93.03	N/A
% NI Primary school average	95.6	95.4	N/A	N/A
FSME Percentage ¹	60.2	64.1	63.2	60
No. of children on SEN register	40	47	60	64
% of children on SEN register	30.1	33.1	38.7	49
No. of children with statements of educational need	*	*	*	*

Source: data as held by the school.

* fewer than 5

N/A not available

4. Overall findings of the inspection

Overall effectiveness	Important areas for improvement
Achievements and standards	Good
Provision for learning	Important areas for improvement
Leadership and management	Important areas for improvement
Naíscoil	Good

5. Achievements and standards

- Most of the children attain good standards in literacy, in both Irish and English. Throughout the school, the children have a good understanding of spoken Irish and most respond well in Irish with developing fluency and confidence. The children in the foundation stage are developing well their early phonological awareness and are beginning to write with appropriate fluency and accuracy. As the children progress through the key stages, they: write increasingly for a range of purposes and audiences; develop their understanding of the processes of planning and drafting their written work; and use information and communication technology (ICT) to present their work. The children require, however, further opportunities to write in a range of forms in meaningful contexts and to use more effectively ICT to enhance their learning experiences in literacy. In the foundation stage and key stage (KS) 1, the standard of presentation is good in a majority of the children's books. By the end of KS2, almost all of the children present their work to a high standard and have developed well their linguistic skills of transferring their knowledge and understanding across both languages through meaningful and interesting literary contexts. By year 7, the most able children read with a good level of fluency and understanding, in both Irish and English.

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

- The standards achieved by the children in mathematics are good. Most of them enjoy mathematics and use mathematical terminology in Irish with increasing confidence and accuracy. By the end of KS2, the most able children are able to apply a good range of strategies, explain their thinking and demonstrate flexibility in problem-solving tasks. There is variation in the quality of the children's written communication across the key stages, however, by the end of KS2, they present their mathematics with clarity and confidence.
- In the naíscoil, almost all of the children are well-settled for the beginning of their pre-school year. They show a good understanding of the Irish spoken to them and are beginning to use single words and phrases during play. The children are increasingly secure in the routines of the day and develop well their social skills and understanding of early mathematical concepts during, for example, the range of play opportunities available to them and the effective dinner routine. Most of the children can play collaboratively and purposefully; their fine motor skills are developing well as they use, with increasing skill, the good variety of tools available across the play areas. They listen attentively to the small group story session and engage with enjoyment and enthusiasm in the songs and rhymes.
- Throughout the school, the children are friendly and courteous to visitors and almost all are well-behaved.

6. Provision for learning

- Overall the quality of the planning, learning, teaching and assessment has important areas for improvement. The long-term planning guides appropriately the content of the teaching in most areas of the curriculum. There are inconsistencies, however, in the quality of the medium-term planning, resulting in variation in the quality of the learning experiences and in the progression the children make in their learning. The school has identified appropriately the need to review and update the current approach to planning and has commenced, at senior leadership level, this improvement work. It will be important that the school monitors and evaluates the impact, on the quality of provision and the standards achieved by the children, of any revised approach to planning. In the foundation stage, the planning and provision for play-based learning do not build adequately upon the good and very good learning experiences available to the children in the naíscoil.
- There were important areas for improvement in almost one-half of the lessons observed during the inspection. In these lessons there was: a lack of differentiated planning for the learning needs of all the children; limited use of assessment for learning strategies; too much teacher exposition; and an emphasis on completing activities, rather than meaningful contextualised learning. In the more effective lessons, the learning had a meaningful and purposeful context; the teachers had appropriately high expectations of the children; and, they provided well-planned and stimulating opportunities for the children to collaborate in paired and group work.

- The staff have started to use internal data effectively to identify children to receive withdrawal support. The individual education plans guide effectively the learning and teaching in the withdrawal provision. The quality of the provision for children who require additional support with aspects of their learning across the school, however, has important areas for improvement. There is a need to develop a more rigorous approach to monitoring and evaluating the quality of the individual education plans in all classes and to tracking the progress made by the children in their learning. There is also a need to review the role of classroom assistants in the bunscoil in supporting children with their learning.
- The provision for literacy has important areas for improvement. The long term planning provides a broad framework for progression in language and literacy in both Irish and English; this needs to be reviewed and updated to ensure that there are sufficiently progressive opportunities for the children to develop and apply their talking and listening, reading and writing skills in meaningful contexts across all areas of learning. In the good practice, in a majority of the literacy lessons observed, the children had opportunities to read, to talk and listen and to write for a meaningful purpose. In the less effective practice, the learning was not sufficiently challenging and was over-reliant on repetitive, de-contextualised tasks. The school has identified appropriately the need to develop the children's enjoyment of reading and has invested significantly in appropriate reading resources and programmes in both languages. The school now needs to: plan how to integrate appropriately these resources into classroom practice; and, monitor and evaluate the impact they are having on learning, teaching and on the standards the children achieve in all areas of literacy in both languages. The children have limited opportunities to develop their oral presentation skills in both Irish and English.
- The provision for mathematics has important areas for improvement. While the children experience a balanced coverage of number, shape and space, measures and data-handling, the school is currently revising the whole-school overview for mathematics to improve further this provision. The impact of this work is already evident in the teachers' medium-term planning for numeracy. The school is also enhancing the provision for mental mathematics across the school. The teaching approaches in mathematics do not link sufficiently the children's learning experiences to real life situations and, where appropriate, connect their learning across other areas of the curriculum. By the end of KS2, there are more appropriate opportunities for open-ended investigations and consequently, the children are challenged to explain their mathematical thinking and understanding.
- The quality of the provision in the naíscail is good. The attractive and well-organised learning environment promotes effectively the children's development, decision-making, independence and self-management skills. The quality of the interactions between the staff and the children is consistently of a good to very good standard. The staff listen attentively to the children, take account of their ideas and respond to their individual needs and interests. They have created a positive immersion learning environment in the naíscail and are effective linguistic role models for the children. There are good to very good opportunities for learning across all areas of the pre-school curriculum. The processes of observation, assessment and planning are not sufficiently developed. The staff, through self-evaluation, have identified the areas requiring further improvement and the impact of any improvement work to date is evident.

- The quality of pastoral care is good. This is characterised by a welcoming, inclusive ethos and supportive working relationships at all levels. The school council and the selection of digital leaders are providing good opportunities for the children to develop leadership roles.

7. Leadership and management

- The quality of the leadership and management of the school has important areas for improvement. The current school development has been informed by an appropriate consultation and is partially compliant. The school's processes for self-evaluation and the capacity of leadership at all levels to evaluate the impact of the improvement work are underdeveloped. The action plans lack appropriate targets that focus on improving the quality of the provision and meeting the learning needs of all of the children.
- The senior leadership team are highly committed to the well-being of the children and the staff. They have managed sensitively and supportively a wide range of challenging situations in the past year.
- The school has well-established links with the parents and the wider community. The active parent-teacher association, Cairde Bheann Mhadagáin, is supportive of the life and work of the school. The staff have established important partnerships with a range of outside agencies to provide support and guidance to the children, their parents and staff when necessary.
- Based on the evidence available at the time of inspection, the ETI's evaluation is that there can be confidence in the aspects of governance evaluated. The governors have been very proactive in supporting the school and are committed to promoting the well-being of the whole school community. The governors now need to:
 - take a more active role in the school development planning process; and
 - be better informed about the standards the children attain and the quality and consistency of their learning experiences.
- 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 in KS2 reported that they are happy and secure in school and know what to do if they have any concerns about their well-being.

8. Overall effectiveness

Bunscoil and Naíscoil Bheann Mhadagáin needs to address important areas for improvement in the interest of all the learners.

The areas for improvement are to:

- improve the school development planning process, ensuring that the action plans are focused on outcomes and on the learning needs of the children;

- improve the quality of the planning, learning, teaching and assessment in order to improve the learning experiences for all children and raise the standards they attain; and
- develop the capacity of the leadership to monitor and evaluate the quality of the provision and the standards achieved by all children.

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 12 to 18 months.

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