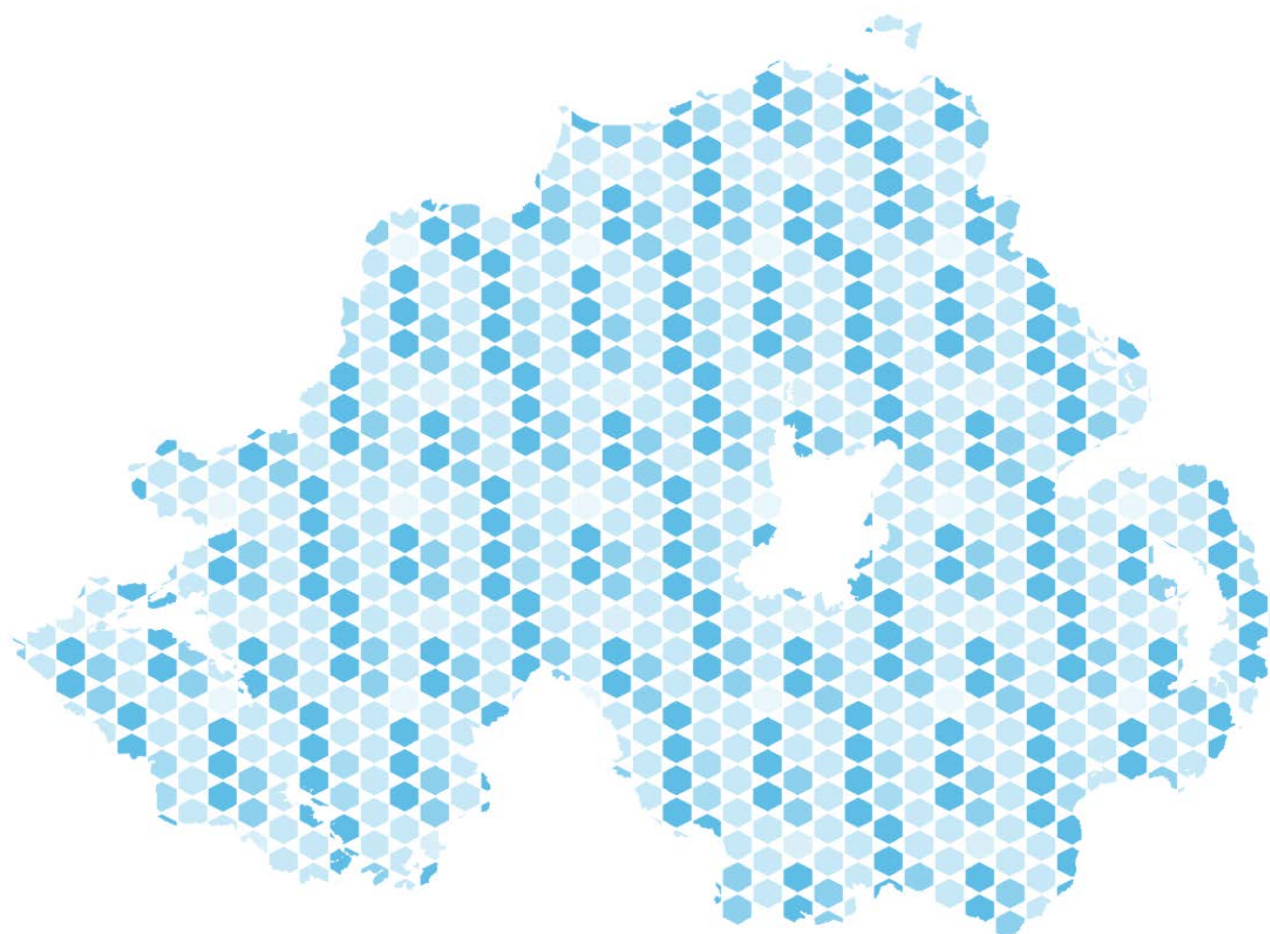


# PRIMARY INSPECTION 2015-16



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

Gaelscoil an Chaistil,  
Ballycastle, County Antrim

Report of an Inspection in  
November 2015

*eti*

*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

CUSTOMER  
SERVICE  
EXCELLENCE



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

Thirty-eight percent of parents responded to the questionnaires. Their responses indicated very high levels of satisfaction with the life and work of the school. In particular, the parents highlighted their satisfaction with their children's learning experiences and progress, their appreciation of the staff's work and the caring and supportive ethos within the school. Eighty percent of the staff responded to the questionnaires; all of their responses were very positive. They emphasised the quality of the working relationships, the opportunities the pupils have to contribute to decision making across the school and the many opportunities that staff have to share good practice. The ETI has reported to the principal and representatives of the board of governors the very few issues emerging from the questionnaires and the discussions.

## **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 with a particular focus on literacy; including how the school is addressing low attainment and underachievement where applicable;
- quality of provision for learning with a particular focus on literacy, including the nursery unit; and
- quality of leadership and management.

## **3. Context**

Gaelscoil an Chaistil and Naíscoil an Chaistil are situated in the town of Ballycastle, in the Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council. There are currently 83 children attending the gaelscoil and 25 in the naíscoil. Almost all of the children come from the town and the remainder from surrounding rural areas.

Gaelscoil an Chaistil	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Enrolment	75	82	79	83
% School attendance	95.7	96.3	95.1	N/A
% NI Primary school average	94.9	95.6	N/A	N/A
FSME Percentage <sup>1</sup>	36.1	33.6	43	43.4
No. of children on SEN register	14	20	28	29
% of children on SEN register	18.6	24.4	35.4	34.9
No. of children with statements of educational need	0	0	*	*
No. of newcomer children	0	0	0	0

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

\* fewer than 5

N/A not available

#### 4. Overall findings of the inspection

Overall effectiveness	High level of capacity for sustained improvement
Achievements and standards	Very good
Provision for learning	Very good
Leadership and management	Very good
Nursery Unit	Good

#### 5. Achievements and standards

- The children are highly motivated and keen to learn. They respond very well to their teachers and other staff and work effectively in pairs and small groups, supporting each other with their work. They communicate very well with each other in both Irish and English, enjoy engaging in classroom discussions and talk very positively about their learning with their peers and with adults.
- The school's performance data shows that almost all children, including those who require additional support with aspects of their learning, make progress in mathematics in line with their ability or above expectation. A majority of the children make progress in Irish and English in line with their ability or above expectation.
- The quality of the children's spoken Irish is outstanding; they demonstrate high levels of understanding, fluency and accuracy. They use Irish naturally and with ease as the language of social communication and engage fluently in high level discussions about their learning with their teachers and peers. The standards in writing in English and Irish are very good; the children write across a range of genres and for a variety of audiences. By the end of KS2, the children read with fluency and expression in both languages and speak enthusiastically about authors, characters and the material that they are reading.

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

- Almost all of the children in the naíscoil are well settled and engage in concentrated purposeful play. They are developing well their independence and self-management skills and engage readily in play with others. They respond well to the spoken Irish, which is used consistently by the staff, and are using Irish well in the singing and rhyme sessions.

## **6. Provision for learning**

- All of the lessons observed were effective in promoting learning with the majority evaluated as highly effective. In the highly effective lessons, the teachers made skilful use of questioning to develop the children's thinking and offered very good opportunities for children to work collaboratively. The learning was challenging and engaging and progression was evident. There is a whole-school approach to planning which provides very effective guidance for the teachers. In the best practice, the teachers' medium-term and short-term planning is well informed by thorough evaluation of the children's previous learning and the teachers' knowledge of their individual needs.
- The provision for children with additional educational needs is very good. The staff use very well a range of internal assessment data and teacher observations to identify early those children who require additional support. The individual education plans guide well the work of the teachers and classroom assistants. Targets are appropriate and the children benefit from very effective strategies to support them in their learning. There are highly effective partnerships between the withdrawal provision and the classroom, ensuring continuity in the learning experiences for the children.
- The literacy programme is progressive and well balanced and ensures that the children have opportunities to write across a range of genres and for a variety of audiences. The school has identified the need to extend the range of stimuli and contexts for writing to ensure that the children continue to develop their creative writing across the curriculum. The teaching of reading is systematic and uses a range of strategies to improve fluency and comprehension in both languages. A particular strength of the provision in literacy is the opportunity for the children to develop their spoken Irish through classroom, playground and extra-curricular activities and projects.
- The staff of the naíscoil provide good opportunities for learning across all areas of the pre-school curriculum. A particular strength of the naíscoil is the strong immersion learning environment. It will be important for the nursery staff to improve the processes of observation, assessment and planning in order to enrich further the learning experiences of the children.
- The quality of the pastoral care is very good in the school and naíscoil. It is characterised by an inclusive, welcoming ethos and effective links with the parents and wider community. The staff know the children very well and respond effectively to their learning and pastoral needs. The voice of the child is heard, valued and acted upon. There is an ethos of mutual respect at all levels.

## **7. Leadership and management**

- The senior leadership team (SLT) and the governors have a clear shared vision for the development of the school and naíscóil. They have worked hard to raise standards and to improve the quality of learning and teaching through, for example, their commitment to building the capacity of all staff by supporting them in ongoing and continuous professional development. The school development plan (SDP) is effective in promoting improvement and is supported well by appropriate, well-focused action plans. The action plans are used effectively by the coordinators to monitor and evaluate the quality of the provision and to identify appropriate areas for improvement.
- The co-ordinators and principal work well as a team and are skilled in monitoring and evaluating the provision for learning and standards across the school. Effective use is made of teacher observations and performance data to: set whole-class and individual targets; identify low and underachievement; and, track the progress of individual children in great detail.
- Based on the evidence available at the time of inspection, ETI's evaluation is that there can be a high degree of confidence in the aspects of governance evaluated. The governors exercise their challenge function and support well the links with the wider community.
- 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 year 6 reported that they are happy and secure in school and know what to do if they have any concerns about their well-being.
- It will be important that the employing authority, school governors and the staff plan for, and manage, issues related to the sustainability of the school provision and school budget, in order to address the current and future needs of the children and the staff.

## **8. Overall effectiveness**

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.

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