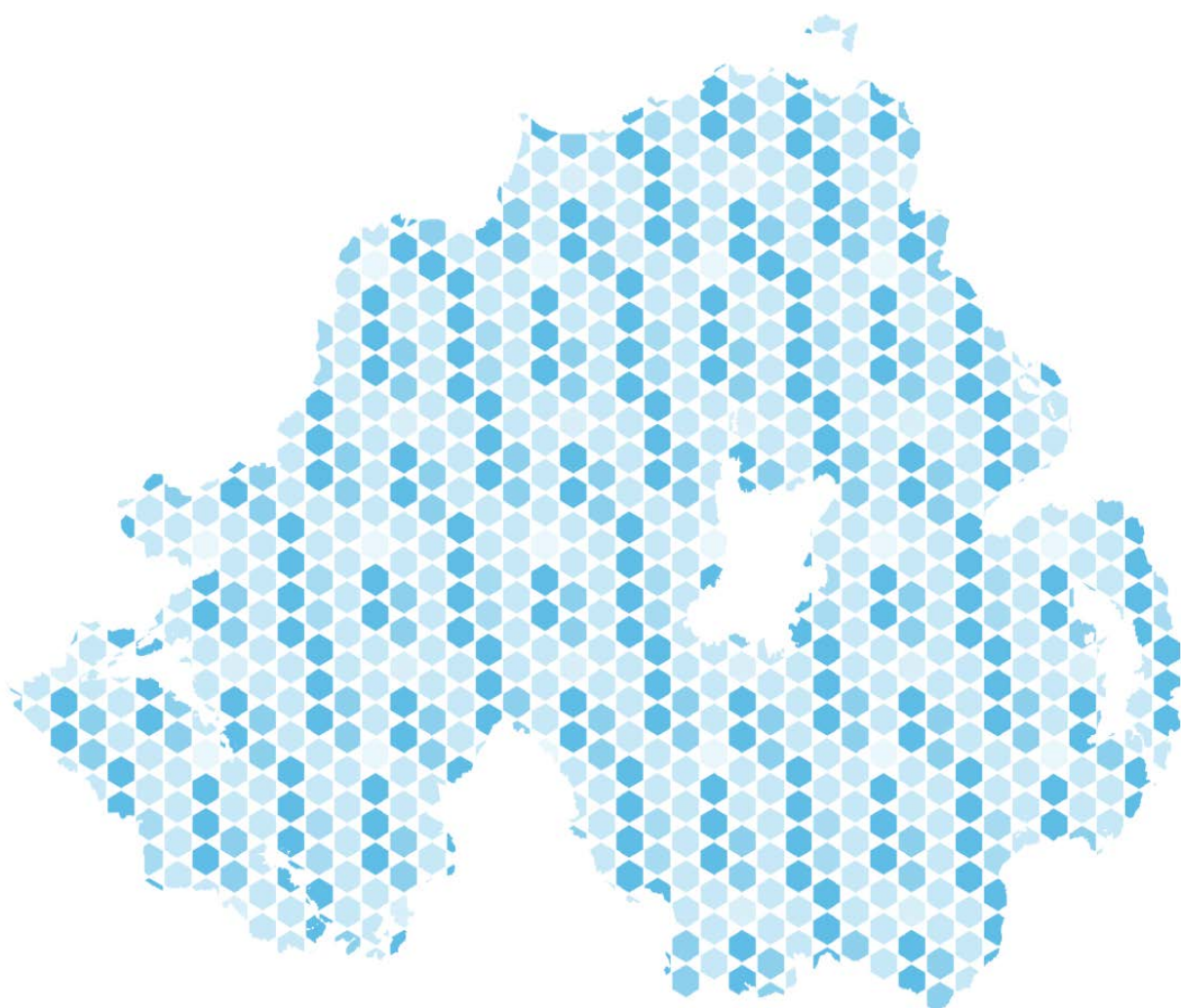


# PRIMARY INSPECTION 2014-15



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

Gaelscoil an Lonnáin,  
Belfast

Report of an Inspection in  
June 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

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

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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 Education and Training Inspectorate's (ETI) publication *Together Towards Improvement: a process for self-evaluation* at: <http://www.etini.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.

Fifteen percent of parents and all of the 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. In particular, the parents highlighted their confidence in the management of the school and the care all of the staff give to their children. The responses to the staff questionnaires were also very positive. 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 for literacy (Irish and English) in the school; and
3. the quality of leadership and management.

## **3. Context**

Gaelscoil an Lonnáin is situated on the Falls Road in West Belfast. Over the past four years the school's enrolment has increased gradually to its current enrolment of 51 children. Almost all of the children come from the local area. At the time of the inspection, 86% of the children were entitled to free school meals (FSM) and 53% of the children had been identified by the school as requiring additional support with aspects of their learning.

Gaelscoil an Lonnáin	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Enrolment	42	46	50	51
% Attendance (NI Average)	94	91	93	92
FSME Percentage <sup>1</sup>	95	86	90	86
% of children on SEN register	54	41	42	53
No. of children with statements of educational needs	*	0	0	0
No. of newcomers	0	0	0	0

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

\* fewer than 5

#### 4. Overall findings of the inspection

<b>Overall Performance Level</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b>
<b>Achievements and Standards</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b>
<b>Provision</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b>
<b>Leadership and Management</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b>

#### 5. Achievements and standards

- Throughout the school the children are well-behaved and respectful of their teachers, each other and visitors. They listen attentively in class, are keen to learn and complete willingly the work set for them by their teachers. When given appropriate opportunities, a majority of the children contribute effectively to whole-class discussions about their learning. All of the children have a very good understanding of Irish and speak with increasing fluency in Irish, as they progress through the school.
- The school's performance data shows that almost all of the children, including those who require additional help with aspects of their learning, make progress in English, Irish and mathematics in line with their ability or above expectation.
- The children achieve satisfactory standards in literacy. By the end of year 7, the most able children read with a good level of fluency and expression, in both Irish and English, and discuss their enjoyment of books they have read in school. The children's spoken Irish is a strength across all key stages. Throughout the school, the children complete the comprehension and grammar-based written tasks set for them and, in a minority of the classes, are beginning to develop their creative and personal writing and the ability to plan, edit and redraft their work. There is a variation in the standard of presentation of the work in the children's books across the school.

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

## 6. Provision

- There is an agreed whole-school approach to planning for literacy and numeracy which has been introduced recently and which provides satisfactory guidance for the teachers. The teachers have identified the need to review and develop further the planning to ensure that the actual learning intended is clear at all times and that there is sufficient consistency, progression and challenge in the learning for all of the children. The teachers have begun to evaluate their planning regularly. The evaluations need to have a greater focus on the children's learning and be used more effectively to inform future planning and practice. There is undue variation in the marking of the children's work throughout the school. Best practice in this regard should be identified and disseminated across the school to ensure greater consistency in guidance for children on how to improve their work. The school has also identified the need to develop further planning across other areas of the curriculum, including, planning for play-based learning.
- In the most effective lessons observed, the learning was suitably differentiated to meet the needs of all the children and was linked effectively to other curricular areas and to prior learning. In the less effective practice, in the majority of the lessons observed, there was a focus on the completion of low-level, routine, decontextualised tasks and worksheets. The lessons were over-directed by the teacher and there were too few opportunities for the children to develop their independence and self-management skills. In almost all of the lessons observed, the teachers created a linguistically-rich learning environment and used effective immersion strategies to support the children in their learning and to extend their use of the Irish language.
- The medium-term planning across the school ensures coverage of a range of aspects of literacy, in both Irish and English, and provides opportunities for the children to transfer their skills from one language to the other. Although the planning is topic-based, there is insufficient use of other curricular areas, including play-based learning, as contexts in which to apply and develop the children's literacy skills. There is a need for a whole-school framework for the teaching of a range of genres in writing to provide extended opportunities for the children to develop their creative and personal writing in a coherent and progressive manner. There is also a need for more rigour in the teaching of reading throughout the school in order to raise further the standards and achievements attained by all children. The school has identified appropriately the need to develop a whole-school scheme for talking and listening and to extend the availability of a range of resources, including information, communication and technology (ICT) resources, to enhance further the learning experiences for the children.
- The quality of the provision for special educational needs is good. The children who require additional support with aspects of their learning are identified early through teacher observations and the analysis of internal assessment data. A range of effective interventions and strategies, including partnerships with an extensive range of external agencies, are put in place to support the children and to reduce the barriers that impact on their learning and development.

- The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care is a strength in the school which is characterised by the caring, inclusive and highly supportive ethos throughout the school. The children are proud of their school and they show care and respect for one another and for the staff. The school has identified appropriately the need to develop further the voice of the pupils through, for example, an active school council.
- The school gives good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity, thereby encouraging the children to adopt healthy lifestyles.

## **7. Leadership and management**

- The senior leadership is committed to the pastoral and learning needs of all the children and staff and has worked hard to develop a culture of collegiality and a professional approach to the work of the school. Appropriate areas for development have been identified through a process of self-evaluation, including the analysis of a range of internal assessment data and consultation with staff and governors. The co-ordinators have developed individual action plans which highlight appropriate priorities for improvement. It will be important that the action planning process is further developed to include arrangements for monitoring and evaluating the provision to ensure that all actions impact on the learning and lead to improvement in the standards achieved by all children.
- There are effective links with parents and the community. Parents are kept informed about the life and work of the school and their children's education through regular newsletters and meetings. There are effective links with the naíscóil (which shares the same building as the gaelscoil) and with the Irish-medium post-primary provider, to ensure smooth transitions at all stages of the children's educational journey.
- 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 governors are actively involved in the school development planning process and provide both a support and challenge function in a range of areas. They are committed to the school and to the local community.
- 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 school ensures appropriate risk assessments are carried out for all occasions that the children leave the school grounds. In discussions with the inspectors, the year 6 and 7 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 most of the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this school is satisfactory; the strengths outweigh areas for improvement in the provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement in leadership and management, in standards and in the learning and teaching, which need to be addressed if the needs of all the children are to be met more effectively.

The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor and report on the school's progress in addressing the areas for improvement over a 12-24 month period.

**The areas for improvement include the need to:**

- develop further play-based learning in the foundation stage;
- review whole-school planning to ensure a more rigorous and consistent approach to learning and teaching in all aspects of literacy; and
- develop a more robust process for monitoring and evaluating the children's learning experiences and attainments throughout the school in order to ensure progression and raise standards.



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