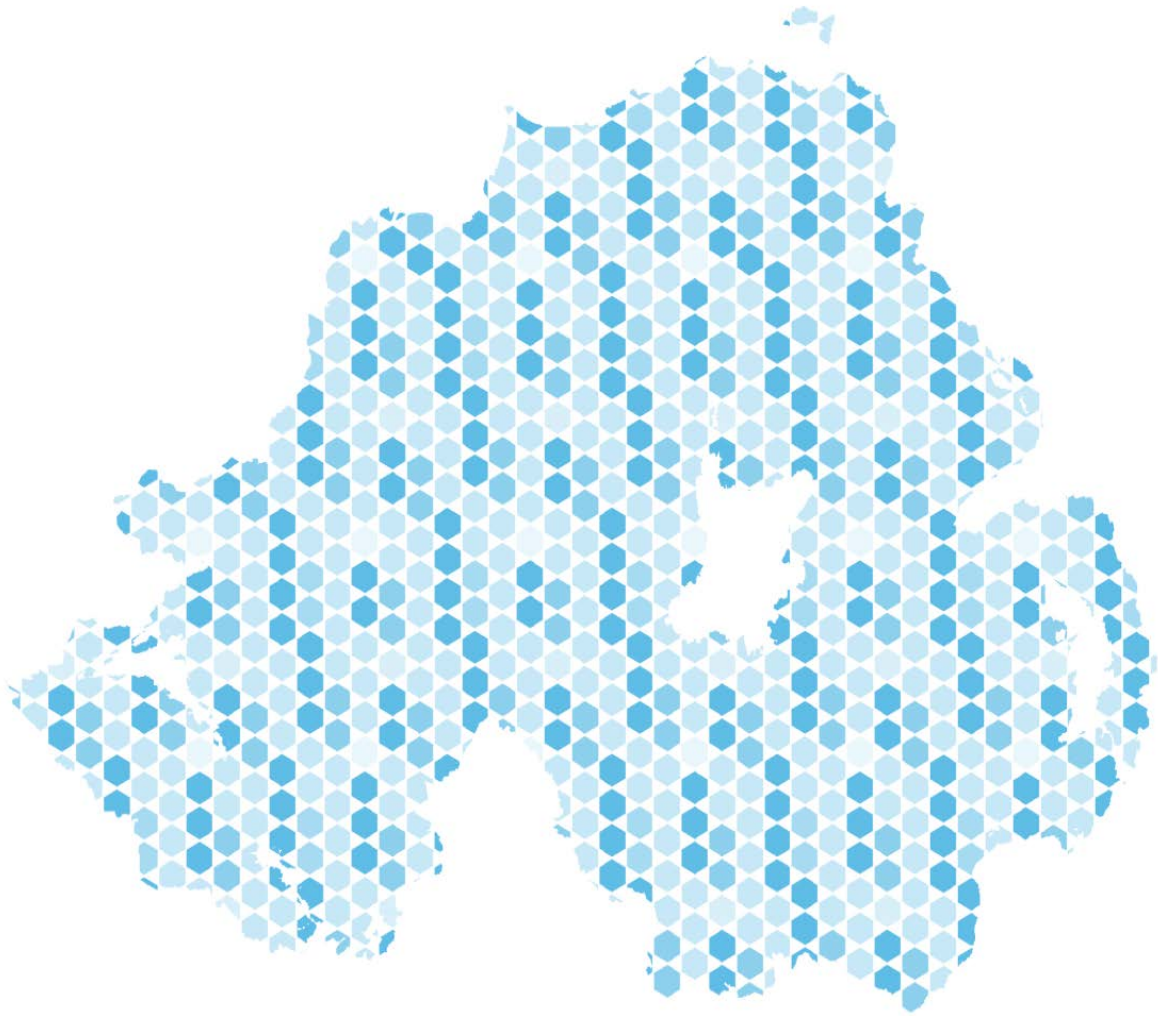


PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Gracehill Primary School and
Nursery Unit, Ballymena,
County Antrim

Controlled, co-educational

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

eti

The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education
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INTRODUCTION

1. Context

Gracehill Primary School and Nursery Unit is situated in the village of Gracehill on the outskirts of Ballymena. The children who attend the school come from a wide catchment area. The school has a single class nursery unit. There has been a recent increase in the number of newcomer children. The principal has been in post since October 2016.

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. 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.

Gracehill Primary School and Nursery Unit	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Enrolment	412	414	417	407
% School attendance	96.3	96.1	96.1	96.2
% NI Primary school average	95.6	95.4	N/A	N/A
FSME Percentage ¹	9	11	10	11
No. of children on SEN register	56	53	54	59
% of children on SEN register	13	13	12	14
No. of children with statements of educational need	5	6	8	7
No. of newcomer children	*	*	*	7

2. Views of parents and staff

Five percent of parents responded to the confidential questionnaire. No staff completed the questionnaire. Most responses from the parental questionnaire were positive; in particular, the parents acknowledged how much their children enjoyed their learning experiences in school and how staff support the care, dignity and well-being of the children. The ETI has communicated to the principal and the chair of the board of governors the main findings, and the small number of concerns arising, from the questionnaires.

3. Focus of the inspection

The ETI was unable to evaluate the:

- outcomes for children with a particular focus on numeracy and literacy including across the curriculum and how the school is addressing low attainment and underachievement where applicable;
- quality of provision with a particular focus on numeracy and literacy including across the curriculum and the nursery unit; and
- quality of leadership and management.

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

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

4. Overall findings of the inspection

Gracehill Primary School and Nursery Unit	Unable to assure the quality of education
Outcomes for learners	No performance level available
Quality of Provision	No performance level available
Leadership and management	No performance level available
Nursery Unit	No performance level available

KEY FINDINGS

5. Outcomes for learners

The ETI was able to evaluate partially the outcomes attained by the children.

- During the inspection, inspectors met with a group of the most able readers from year 7. The children were articulate, expressive and confident when reading aloud. They applied a range of strategies to decipher the meaning of unfamiliar words. The children are knowledgeable about and enjoy reading a wide variety of books.
- By the end of key stage (KS) 2, the most able children are enthusiastic about mathematics and are aware of the relevancy of mathematics in real-life contexts. They are secure in their knowledge of important mathematical ideas and concepts, are flexible in their thinking and justify their answers using accurate mathematical language.

The ETI was unable to evaluate:

- 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 ; and
- the effectiveness and impact of planning, teaching, learning and assessment in promoting successful learning;
- During the inspection, inspectors met with a group of year 6 children, they spoke very positively about their experiences in school, the support and encouragement they receive from the staff, their enjoyment of learning and the opportunities they have to engage in a range of activities beyond the classroom.

7. Leadership and management

The ETI was able to evaluate aspects of leadership and management.

- During the inspection, the ETI met with a representative of the board of governors. It was reported that the governors have a very good range of complementary skills, are well informed about the work and life of the school and, carry out their challenge and support roles.
- A culture of reflection and self-evaluation is beginning to inform school improvement priorities. The current school development plan (SDP) is informed by appropriate consultation with key stakeholders. The associated action plans, however, need to be linked more closely to the school development planning process and more focused on outcomes for learners in order to inform better the process of monitoring and evaluation.
- During the inspection, the school provided evidence that satisfactory arrangements for safeguarding reflect broadly the guidance issued by the relevant Departments. The children reported that they feel safe in school and that they know what to do if they have any concerns about their safety or welfare. However, owing to the action short of strike, the ETI was unable to evaluate fully the outworking of the arrangements for safeguarding in the school.

The ETI was unable to evaluate fully the impact and effectiveness of:

- the strategic leadership and governance;
- the middle leadership; and
- action to promote and sustain improvement including self-evaluation and the development planning process.

CONCLUSION

8. Overall effectiveness

Owing to the impact of the action short of strike being taken by the teachers, 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](#)

In order to conduct a primary inspection, 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.

These arrangements include:

- meetings with the principal and teachers with specific responsibilities on the pre-inspection visit;
- 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.

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.

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 management²:

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.

² And the overall provision in a subject area or unit, as applicable.

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