

EDUCATION AND TRAINING
INSPECTORATE

EDUCATION OTHER THAN AT SCHOOL INSPECTION

Loughan EOTAS Centre, Ballymena,
County Antrim

Report of a Follow-up Inspection in October 2024

Follow-up to the Inspection of Loughan EOTAS centre, Ballymena, County Antrim, BT43 6LX

Introduction

Loughan Education Other Than at School (EOTAS) centre is located in Ballymena for key stage (KS) 4 pupils with complex needs, including social, behavioural and emotional wellbeing needs. The centre works in collaboration with the pupils' mainstream schools and the local further education college. The centre's vision is to nurture, inspire and empower young people through high expectations within a pupil-centred culture of inclusion.

Views of staff, parents/carers and referral schools

The centre staff, a small number of the staff from the referral schools and parents/carers responded to the online confidential questionnaires. The responses indicated their appreciation of the work of the centre and the support given to the pupils. Any issues raised were shared with the centre leader and the Adviser from the Education Authority (EA).

Key actions and changes

The key actions which affect the work of the EOTAS centre are set out below.

The centre has received external support from the EA in relation to the:

- provision of a wide range of staff professional learning;
- use of data to evaluate robustly pupil outcomes and to inform learning and teaching;
- appointment of specialist teachers in English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT) and a centre executive officer;
- ongoing development and review of the effectiveness of the therapeutic curriculum; and
- enhancement of the accommodation.

Key findings

- Loughan EOTAS centre achieves its vision to nurture, inspire and empower young people through high expectations within a pupil-centred culture of inclusion. The pupils learn in a stimulating, well-ordered learning environment, enriched with inspirational displays and access to high-quality subject-specific resources. The pupils told us how they appreciate how they are treated with respect, have fun learning, the impact of the reward system on their motivation and how their successes are celebrated, including their birthdays and other important events.

- The curriculum has been reviewed effectively, through extensive research to include a creative and high-quality therapeutic programme to support the pupils' social, behavioural and emotional wellbeing needs. The therapeutic learning experiences include a mentoring programme, nurture breakfast and lunch, horticulture, physical exercise, relaxation and beauty techniques. This programme enables the pupils to overcome barriers and challenges to their learning.
- The centre staff get to know the pupils quickly and understand their individual contexts from which to provide progressive and challenging learning experiences. The staff plan engaging lessons across the curriculum matched to the pupils' needs, interests and aspirations. They use role models such as film directors, employers and individuals who have overcome significant life challenges to inspire the pupils. Ongoing review of the curriculum is informed well by the views of the pupils and current labour market information. There are also appropriate opportunities for pupils to access specific subjects in their referring school.
- The effective learning and teaching in all lessons observed enabled the pupils to give extended responses to their teachers' skilful questioning, apply their learning in real-life contexts, develop character analysis in English, use mathematical processes confidently and develop their ICT skills creatively and critically. The pupils respond well to their teachers' patient, humorous and intuitive interactions to work independently, in pairs and to support each other with their learning. As a result, the pupils use strategies they have learned to problem solve, manage their emotions, communicate effectively, including asking questions for clarification and for support.
- The pupils access careers education, information, advice and guidance to plan appropriate career pathways. In preparing for life and work, they acquire skills in self-organisation, self-awareness and self-confidence. This helps them to manage better their behaviour and emotions, sleep routines, daily schedules, resources, and develop positive mindsets.
- The staff analyse qualitative and quantitative data, including standardised data, to monitor robustly pupil progress from their individual starting points and to inform individual target setting for the pupils. The staff use their professional learning to skilfully deploy effective strategies to meet the pupils' needs.
- The staff work collaboratively with other schools, EOTAS centres, the local further education college and agencies, such as, the youth service, outdoor education providers, the Police Service of Northern Ireland and the Health and Social Care Trusts to support the pupils and enrich their learning experiences.

- Attendance remains a high priority for the centre. The pupils who do not fulfil their placement due to complex medical and wellbeing needs require better multi-agency support, especially from the EA's Education Welfare Service, to improve their attendance. These interventions and support are key to enable the pupils when they need to manage the challenges of completing public examinations.

Area for action:

- To improve further the pupils' attendance.

Child Protection

At the time of the inspection, the evidence provided by the centre demonstrates that the arrangements for child protection align to the current statutory guidance. The pupils report that they feel safe in the centre and know what to do if they have any concerns about their safety or wellbeing.


Conclusion

Loughan EOTAS centre is achieving its vision to nurture, inspire and empower young people through high expectations within a pupil-centred culture of inclusion. The ETI will work with the centre in addressing the area for action in this report. An element of effective practice has been identified from which others may learn, notably the use of successful learning and teaching strategies which are well matched to the pupils' needs, interests and abilities. No further follow-up inspection is required.

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