

# EDUCATION OTHER THAN AT SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

Thornberry Primary Referral  
Unit and Sunlea Educational  
Guidance Centre

Report of an Inspection in  
February 2015

### 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

Inspectors observed teaching and learning, scrutinised documentation and the young people's written work and held formal and informal discussions with the young people, and staff with specific responsibilities.

The arrangements for this inspection included:

- meetings with the young people and the centre's Educational Psychologist,
- discussions with staff in referring schools; and
- the opportunity for the parents, teaching and support staff to complete a confidential questionnaire.

Questionnaire	Number issued	Number returned	Percentage returned	Number with comments
Parents	29	20	70%	10
Teachers	11	9	82%	7
Support Staff	9	9	100%	8

\* fewer than 5

Almost all of the parental questionnaire responses were positive. The parents valued the progress made by the young people in the management of their behaviour and emotions. The teacher and support staff questionnaire responses were mostly positive, and indicated strong support for the work of the centre. The Education and Training Inspectorate discussed the small number of concerns with the centre's manager and the North Eastern Education and Library Board (NEELB) Assistant Senior Education Officer, Children and Young Peoples Services and, where appropriate, these have been commented on within the report.

## 2. Context

The Thornberry Primary Referral Unit (PRU) and Sunlea Educational Guidance Centre (Sunlea EGC) tuition service are part of the NEELB EOTAS provision for children and young people with social, emotional and behaviour difficulties (SEBD) and are located together on the Ballycastle Road close to Coleraine. In addition, outreach services are provided for primary and post-primary schools to support young people to maintain their place in school. All of the provision is managed by an Area Head of Alternative Education based in the Sunlea Centre. The young people attending come from Coleraine and surrounding areas.

The Sunlea EGC provides EOTAS provision for up to 10 young people from key stages three and four (KS3 and KS4). An NEELB Advisory Officer has overall responsibility for the provision and an Area Head of Alternative Education Provision (AEP) manages the daily running of all aspects of the provision and has specific responsibility for the Sunlea EGC. He is assisted by a deputy and three full-time equivalent teachers with one behaviour support assistant. The young people who attend are referred by the Educational Psychology service and they can attend for three terms plus one term for a re-integration programme if necessary. The Sunlea EGC also provides outreach support to young people in mainstream school who may be at risk of disengagement with education.

The Thornberry PRU is managed by a senior teacher with an assistant teacher and four full time equivalent behaviour support assistants who work in the unit and also support children in schools. The Thornberry PRU provides for up to seven children, from KS1 and KS2 and the tuition service provides for all age groups. The children attend Thornberry PRU in the mornings for four days each week and their own school in the afternoons. The children can attend Thornberry PRU for up to three terms before integrating fully back to school. The tuition service provides education for young people who cannot attend school for medical, social, emotional or behavioural reasons. Those who attend the tuition service provision are referred by a medical specialist or the area behaviour support team. The service is staffed by five permanent teachers and, when required, a small number of temporary teachers. Tuition takes place in the Sunlea main building or in public libraries or other venues across the area.

Sunlea EGC	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Enrolment in the centre	14	12	13	8
Outreach support only	41	47	53	41
Attendance %	75%	70%	74%	75%
FSME Percentage <sup>1</sup>	60%	62%	38%	75%
No. of newcomers	0	0	0	0

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

\* indicates a number fewer than 5

### 3. Focus of inspection

The inspection focused on:

- the young people's achievements and outcomes,
- the quality of provision; and
- the quality of leadership and management.

### 4. Overall findings

Overall Performance Level	Inadequate
Achievements and Outcomes	Inadequate
Provision	Inadequate
Leadership and Management	Inadequate

### Key findings of the inspection

#### 5. Achievements and outcomes

- All of the young people attending Sunlea EGC and Thornberry have histories of disrupted schooling, non-attendance or social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.

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

- The behaviour of the children in the Thornberry PRU is effectively managed and, consequently, they settle well to their work and play activities. The children make steady progress throughout their placement and almost all re-integrate successfully into their own schools on a full-time basis. The children receiving outreach support from the Thornberry service learn how to effectively manage and improve their behaviour and parents and schools value this greatly.
- The young people attending the Sunlea EGC engage, with encouragement, in most lessons, respond to the positive learning environment and develop improved attitudes to learning. Almost all of the young people at the time of the inspection conformed to the rules and boundaries set and behaved appropriately.
- The attendance at Sunlea EGC requires significant improvement; in the three months prior to the inspection the average attendance of the young people was 77%. The centre's data indicates that within the last cohort of nine young people who attended the full time programme, only two have successfully re-integrated back to their school and have maintained their places with significant support. In the cohort of young people who attended during 2012-2013 only two of the 12 young people successfully re-integrated back to mainstream post primary school.
- Sunlea EGC put in place a pilot partnership programme last year; the young people attended both their post primary school and the Sunlea EGC for part of their school week. The centre's data indicates that three of the four KS3 young people who took part in the pilot have successfully maintained their placement in mainstream school in year 11. In addition, the average attendance of the young people for the three month period was 95%.
- The young people in KS3 and KS4 are not realising their full potential due to a very limited curriculum and poor outcomes. There are insufficient opportunities for the young people to achieve short duration formal accredited qualifications that could motivate them and develop their self confidence. The KS4 young people are not following a curriculum specific to their needs to ensure they can effectively progress to the next stage of their education.
- The staff in Sunlea EGC do not monitor or track and evaluate effectively the progress made by the young people in English, mathematics, emotional well-being or self-esteem. The current arrangements are inadequate for staff to use as a basis to plan appropriate and thorough personal programmes and to inform the young people's parents and schools of their progress and success.

## **6. Provision for learning**

- The provision for the KS1 children on part-time placement in the Thornberry PRU is meeting their needs very effectively. The literacy and numeracy lessons observed in KS1 were well planned and the children benefit from the opportunities to develop their mathematics, reading, writing, communication and social skills. Thornberry PRU runs an enjoyable weekly reunion social skills group for children who have availed of the service; they are successful in keeping track of the children's achievements and in teaching them age appropriate social and communication strategies.

- All of the Sunlea EGC staff work hard to develop effective working relationships with the young people. The staff interact well with the young people; however breakfast time and break-times are not used effectively enough to develop the social skills and positive dispositions of the young people, and as an additional learning opportunity that is assessed appropriately.
- In the majority of the lessons observed the teachers effectively engaged the young people with interesting topics. However the lessons are not part of a coherent overall scheme devised in collaboration with the referring schools, enabling the young people to keep up with their peers and eventually re-integrate successfully back to their mainstream school. The teachers do not develop individual learning plans or programmes designed around the needs of each young person. There is a lack of appropriate baseline information and insufficient planning to address effectively the needs of the young people.
- The curriculum does not provide an effective framework to enable the staff to prepare the young people to cope back in school. Sunlea EGC does not have an effective system for tracking the young people's progress in either their learning or their personal development. As a result, there is no firm basis on which to set targets for improvement or to review how well they have achieved.
- The teachers, in conjunction with the Educational Psychologist, need to implement effective individual support programmes to help the young people address their social, emotional and behavioural issues and ensure that they can transition smoothly to their mainstream post primary school.
- The provision for mathematics and literacy is not effective in meeting the needs of the young people. To develop the provision further, the teachers need to develop better links with the young people's schools in order to provide appropriate coverage of the curriculum, and to put in place a baseline assessment system for literacy and numeracy for KS3 and KS4, with opportunities for appropriate accreditation. The teachers need to systematically and effectively record progression and achievement, and identify any particular early individual support required.
- The school, parent, young person and Sunlea EGC staff should agree the intended outcomes for the EOTAS placement at the initial planning meeting. Those outcomes would then become the priorities for each young person to focus on and for teachers to devise strategies to empower the young person to achieve by the end of their placement. In addition, better communication from schools in sharing information in relation to mathematics and English schemes and lessons, to ensure continuity and progression for those young people on placements, would improve the provision in these areas and facilitate easier re-integration.
- The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care within Sunlea EGC is satisfactory. There is a positive ethos throughout the centre and effective working relationships are evident amongst the staff and young people. The staff actively promote positive and appropriate behaviour, and most of the young people respond to the structured reward system; however a review of the discipline policy has led to confusion regarding acceptable boundaries and rules amongst the young people. They are not given sufficient opportunities to discuss the points awarded for appropriate behaviour or to reflect and take responsibility for their behaviour and learning.

- The young people's work and the varied range of activities and experiences available for them throughout the year, are celebrated in displays throughout the centre. During meetings with the inspectors, the young people spoke about the activities they enjoy at the centre and the opportunities they have for outings and sporting activities. In order to meet the needs of all the young people more effectively, the centre needs to provide a more therapeutic approach to address their social, emotional and behavioural difficulties in order that they develop further, skills to enable them to return and integrate successfully to their mainstream schools.
- There is a need to broaden the careers advice and guidance further, including access to impartial careers advice and guidance, in order to help all of the young people and their guardians make appropriate and informed career choices. The KS4 young people do not have the opportunity to participate in vocational education courses.
- The centre promotes healthy breaks and provides regular opportunities for the young people to engage in energetic physical activity and encourages them to adopt healthy lifestyles.

## **7. Leadership and management**

- The management of the Sunlea EGC, Thornberry PRU and the tuition service is inadequate. The management arrangements need to be reviewed and improved to ensure that the learning and teaching within the centre, and for the tuition service, are appropriately and effectively monitored and evaluated. In addition, management need to review the policies and procedures for the tuition service and carry out an audit to ensure that the staff has the appropriate resources, including Information and Communication Technology equipment, to meet the needs of the young people.
- The management needs to establish and develop more effective working relationships with the referring schools, to exchange curriculum planning and progression information and targets, and to support and enable a smooth transition for the young people when they resume their mainstream placements. In addition, it needs to involve all staff in progressing the centre's development planning process and introducing effective systems for self-evaluation.
- The management and staff of Sunlea EGC and Thornberry PRU know the young people and their families well and demonstrate a strong commitment to their welfare and well-being. The model for the Thornberry PRU KS1 and KS2 provision is effective. However management have identified appropriately the need to review the current model of KS3 and KS4 provision to ensure that the needs of the young people are addressed fully and that there is a clear focus on re-integration within a shorter timescale for those that have the capacity to do so.
- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the centre has satisfactory arrangements in place for safeguarding young people. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education. The centre needs to find alternative arrangements to the current practice of staff transporting young people in their own cars on a frequent and regular basis. In discussions with the young people, they commented on the activities in the centre that they enjoy, and indicated that they feel safe and secure and know where to seek help if they have concerns.



- The centre is governed by the Behaviour Support Service Management Group (BSSMG). The BSSMG is well informed about the centre's provision, but they need to support and develop the management to meet more effectively the needs of the young people.
- The centre has developed very good links with the local community and a range of appropriate support agencies. The young people support the pupils from Sandelford Special school when they attend riding for the disabled sessions in Castleroe Coleraine, as part of the xl Prince's Trust programme.

## **8. Conclusion**

The Thornberry Referral Unit for KS1 and KS2 is meeting effectively the needs of the children referred and is supporting them well, towards successful re-integration to their mainstream school.

In almost all of the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by Sunlea EGC for KS3 and KS4 young people is inadequate; the areas for improvement outweigh the strengths in the provision. The inspection has identified significant areas for improvement in outcomes, learning and teaching, and leadership and management, which need to be addressed urgently if the centre is to meet effectively the needs of all of the learners.

In relation to the main areas for improvement; the NEELB, in discussion with the management of Sunlea EGC, should endeavour to:

- review the current model of KS3 and KS4 provision to ensure that the needs of the young people are more fully addressed and that there is a clear focus on re-integration within a shorter timescale for those that have the capacity to do so; in addition, there is a need to establish a longer term provision for the very small number who cannot return to mainstream school.
- provide a more therapeutic approach to addressing the social, emotional and behavioural difficulties of the young people, in order that they develop further skills to enable them to return and integrate successfully to their mainstream schools; and
- review and improve the management arrangements to ensure that the learning and teaching within the centre, and for the tuition service, are appropriately and effectively monitored and evaluated with robust arrangements to effectively track the progress and well-being of the young people.

The ETI will monitor and report on the centre's progress in addressing the areas for improvement, over the next 12 to 18 months.

### **Resources and Health and Safety**

1. The ICT resources within the Sunlea EGC and Thornberry PRU and tuition services require updating and significant development to ensure that they support and enhance effectively the learning of the young people.
2. The mobile classroom is isolated from the main building and is used by the KS3 and KS4 young people. The mobile does not have an electronically controlled access system to ensure the safety of the young people.
3. The main building is not conducive to effective teaching and learning and it is a cold and uninviting building with single glazed windows that offer poor insulation and contribute to the heating costs.
4. The home economics area in the main building is cold and the facilities are rudimentary. The facility requires redesign and updating to help ensure a safe and worthwhile learning experience for the young people.
5. The external cladding at the base of the mobile classrooms is in a poor state of repair and remedial work is required to prevent vermin infestation.

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