

# EDUCATION OTHER THAN AT SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

Beechcroft Education Centre,  
Belfast

Report of an Inspection  
in May 2013



Providing Inspection Services for  
Department of Education  
Department for Employment and Learning  
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

CUSTOMER  
SERVICE  
EXCELLENCE



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## Inspection method and evidence base

Inspectors observed lessons over 7 and 8 May, scrutinised documentation and the young peoples' written work and held formal and informal discussions with the young people, teachers and staff with specific responsibilities.

The key questions and quality indicators which guide inspection and self-evaluation of schools, which were applied to this inspection, are available in the Inspectorate's publication *Together Towards Improvement: a process for self evaluation* at:

<http://www.etini.gov.uk/index/together-towards-improvement/together-towards-improvement-post-primary.htm>

The arrangements for this inspection included:

- a meeting with a representative from the South Eastern Education and Library Board;
- discussions with individuals and a group of young people; 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	18	*	16.66	*
TEACHERS	*	*	75	*
SUPPORT STAFF	*	*	75	*

\* fewer than 5

## 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%

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) use the following performance levels in reports:

DESCRIPTOR
Outstanding
Very Good
Good
Satisfactory
Inadequate
Unsatisfactory

## 1. Context

The Beechcroft Education Centre is situated in the Forster Green Healthcare campus in South Belfast and was opened in 2010. The centre provides education for children and adolescents who are patients in the adjoining Beechcroft Child and Adolescent mental health regional inpatient unit. The South-Eastern Education and Library Board provides the teaching staff in the education centre and oversees the educational provision. The centre provides full time education for up to 36 children and young people of compulsory school age who have a range of acute complex and severe mental health difficulties. The young people are often admitted at very short notice to the inpatient unit and the average length of stay is fourteen weeks. The education centre is staffed by a temporary head of service, seven permanent full time staff; three teachers, a senior adolescent liaison officer and three learning support assistants. There are two part-time temporary teachers and a small number of part time teachers are employed to provide specialist subject tuition when required. The head of service was seconded to the post two years ago. In addition to her responsibilities for the Beechcroft Education Centre, she manages also the, Groomspoint Intensive Support Learning Unit, the Crisis Assessment Intervention Team (a regional service) and the Anxiety Based School Absence Service.

The numbers of young people enrolled vary considerably at any given time as they are admitted and discharged from hospital on a frequent basis. At the time of inspection there were sixteen young people of compulsory school age and the majority were attending the education centre as their illness and treatment permitted. The attendance is variable depending on the medical treatment programme and state of health of the young people each day.

## 2. Focus of the inspection

The inspection focused on:

- the pupils' achievements and standards;
- the quality of provision for learning; and
- the quality of leadership and management, including the school's procedures for self-evaluation leading to improvement.

In addition, the school's arrangements for pastoral care, including child protection and safeguarding, were evaluated.

## 3. Overall findings

<b>Overall Performance Level</b>	
<b>Achievements and Standards</b>	<b>Very good</b>
<b>Provision for Learning</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>Leadership and Management</b>	<b>Good</b>

## THE OVERALL FINDINGS OF THE INSPECTION

The overall quality of provision in Beechcroft Education Centre is good.

The young people on admission to the education centre are at a difficult time in their lives and experiencing acute psychiatric and mental health issues. The provision of education enables them to keep up with their school programme and to feel less anxiety on their return to their registered school.

### 4. **Achievements and standards**

The young people recognise the importance of maintaining their education programme and most choose, for the majority of the time, to attend classes and engage well in lessons. The majority make very good progress and achieve levels which ensure they keep pace with their school programme. They particularly value the weekly “resilience group sessions which provide them with the opportunity to express their views and emotions in a group activity that develops their wellbeing and self confidence. The education centre does not provide sufficient opportunity for the personal and social development of the young people.

- The young people are well behaved and report that they value the high level of support from their teachers and learning support assistants which ensures they can continue their studies and keep up to date with the work in their registered school. They therefore are not overly anxious about examination work or re-integrating back to school.
- The curriculum is personalised to meet individual needs and is relevant as it focuses on continuing the education missed as a result of hospitalisation and ensures that those studying for public examinations are well prepared.
- The teachers effectively organise the learning into smaller steps or extend it, where relevant, ensuring the young people acquire new knowledge and skills rapidly.

### 5. **Provision for learning**

Lessons take place in a quiet, calm and well resourced teaching environment which is conducive to learning and individual study and responsive to the moods of the young people. They settle to work with ease, remain busy and present work of a good standard.

- The teachers’ planning is effective and individualised to differentiate the work for the young people with effective, well thought-out individual education plans.
- The teachers establish good links with the young people’s registered schools and there is an effective system in place to obtain academic work from the schools which ensures that the disruption caused by the period of hospitalisation to the young person’s education is minimised.
- The good working relationships developed with the teachers and learning assistants ensures the young people remain calm, feel safe and engage effectively in lessons.

- The young people use information and communication technology well to research and produce good quality work but the lack of the C2k facility in the centre prevents them from accessing the range of educational programmes available to their peers in mainstream schools.( Appendix 1)
- The teaching observed during the inspection was mostly good or better and in the most effective practice the teachers know the young people well and use good strategies to encourage and motivate them to achieve. The lessons are planned in discussion with the individual young people and realistic attainable targets are set for them to achieve.
- The pastoral care is good. The teachers and learning assistants provide a purposeful environment for learning and there are systems in place to monitor carefully the wellbeing of the young people and to put in place measures to support them. The centre needs to develop better links with parents and ensure they are informed about pastoral care policies. The further development of the personal and social taught programme and opportunities for the young people to work in small groups would enhance the provision.

## 6. Leadership and management

The head of service manages the routine and operation of the centre efficiently; she has established very good lines of communication with the clinical and nursing staff and has ensured that the educational needs of the young people are well prioritised and acted upon.

- Teaching and learning support staff are very aware of the needs of the young people and the primacy of their medical and mental health needs and show great understanding and patience in supporting them.
- There are insufficient opportunities for the teaching and learning support staff to meet and evaluate as a team the impact of the curriculum and how to develop it further.
- The management need to consult with other professionals on how to provide ways to track the progress of the young people when they are discharged and support them in education during the transition period when returning back to their registered school.
- 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 broadly reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education but the following areas need to be addressed. The head of service needs to attend a child protection training course and ensure that the centre communicates effectively with parents and carers to keep them informed about the progress of their young people. In discussions with the young people they commented on the activities in the centre that they enjoy and indicated that they felt safe and secure and know where to seek help if they have concerns.

## 7. Conclusion

**In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this centre is good.**

The centre has important strengths in most of its educational and pastoral provision.

**The main areas for improvement, which the centre has demonstrated the capacity to address, are listed below:**

- the head of service and staff need to develop further the personal and social taught programme;
- the head of service and staff should establish better links with parents and ensure they are informed about pastoral care policies and the educational progress of the young people; and
- the head of service should create a system to track the progress of the young people when they are discharged and support them during the transition period back to their registered school.

ETI will monitor the centre's progress on the areas for improvement.

**Accommodation/Resources**

The lack of C2k information management systems and infrastructure within this centre is a barrier to learning. In addition the lack of C2K inhibits effective communication or efficient transfer of appropriate educational information with mainstream schools and other education providers.



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