

YOUTH INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Shannaghmore Outdoor
Education Centre, Newcastle

Report of an Inspection
in June 2012



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



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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%

In assessing the various features of the provision, Inspectors relate their evaluations to six descriptors as set out below:

DESCRIPTOR
Outstanding
Very Good
Good
Satisfactory
Inadequate
Unsatisfactory

GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THE REPORT

DE	Department of Education
SELB	Southern Education and Library Board

1. CONTEXT

1.1 Shannaghmore outdoor education centre (the centre) is funded by the SELB youth service and is located approximately two miles south of Newcastle. Set in 50 acres of woodland, it opened as an outdoor education centre in 1983, with extended accommodation and an administration block added in 2008.

1.2 Following a management restructure in June 2011, the warden, previously deployed in Killowen, was given responsibility for the overall management of both Killowen and Shannaghmore outdoor education centres. The staff team at Shannaghmore includes two senior outdoor education instructors, 20 part-time instructors, a senior executive officer, two office staff, four kitchen staff and a groundsman. The two senior instructors have been employed for many years in the centre. In recent years there has been an increasing reliance on part-time staff to help deliver day-time and week-end courses.

1.3 The centre has residential accommodation for 34 young people and 8 leaders in the main house; another 25 places are available in a detached bunkhouse building. The facilities are primarily used by primary schools during the week and by youth organisations at week-ends.

1.4 According to the data collated by the organisation, approximately 55 schools and 51 youth organisations used the centre last year. (Appendix, tables 2 & 3) The number of post-primary schools using the centre has decreased from 23 to 13. There is not enough analysis or evaluation available to establish clearly the reason for this reduction. The centre has agreed targets for occupancy rates with the SELB, which it has well exceeded over the last three years. The number of schools and youth organisations who make return bookings is high; for example, 90% of primary schools made a return visit last year. It is important that the balance of return and new bookings is kept under review.

1.5 The SELB youth service meets all the recurrent costs of the centre; all of the participants contribute a reasonable amount to the cost of the accommodation. A senior education officer from the SELB has responsibility for the financial management of both of the outdoor education centres; he liaises closely with the warden and other SELB officers.

2. FOCUS

The inspection focused on:

- the young people's achievements and standards;
- the quality of the provision; and
- the quality of the leadership and management, including the centre's processes for self-evaluation leading to improvement.

3. OVERALL FINDINGS OF THE INSPECTION

The quality of provision in the centre is good.

In most of the areas inspected the overall quality of provision in Shannaghmore outdoor education centre is good. The quality of the pastoral care is very good. The inspection has identified an area for improvement which the centre has demonstrated the capacity to address.

4. KEY FINDINGS

4.1 ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

The quality of the young people's achievements and standards is good.

4.1.1 The young people engage well in the wide range of appropriately challenging, age-related activities. They enjoy taking responsibility; they co-operate well with their peers; and, they work effectively as a team.

4.1.2 The well-planned activities enhance the young people's self-confidence and respect for themselves and for others. Most of the young people respond positively to the good range of outdoor education activities. They ask relevant questions, explore the natural surroundings and apply the skills they learn in different meaningful contexts, including links to their formal education.

4.1.3 The feedback from teachers indicates that some of the pupils, who do not normally respond well in the classroom, make a marked improvement in their enthusiasm to learn, in their problem-solving and in the development of leadership skills while participating in the activities at the centre.

4.1.4 In addition to the centre's normal programme, the instructors provide a wide range of other activities. Over 600 post-primary pupils participated in an orienteering festival as part of the effective collaboration between Armagh District Council and the SELB youth service. Another 100 young adults, part-time youth workers and teachers have successfully completed a range of outdoor education qualifications including the 'Rescue Emergency Care' first aid certificate, necessary for the completion of the hill-walking leadership award. Youth work staff from the SELB inclusion unit along with instructors from the centre have collaborated effectively to assist over 40 young people in achieving environmental awards, disability awareness training and the residential element of the Duke of Edinburgh award.

4.2 PROVISION FOR LEARNING

The quality of the provision for learning is good.

4.2.1 The centre has a welcoming, caring ethos and the staff have realistic expectations of the young people in terms of behaviour and the acquisition of skills and knowledge. The premises and wider environment are attractive, set in an ideal location to accommodate a good range of activities. The environment is conducive to learning and provides a healthy and safe environment.

4.2.2 The range of challenging and enjoyable programmes is well-planned and matched to the needs and abilities of all of the users. The staff and instructors are appropriately reviewing the activities to extend the range of provision; in addition to traditional activities such as bouldering, climbing, canoeing and orienteering, they wish to include adventure sports such as mountain-biking.

4.2.3 The quality of the sessions observed ranged from satisfactory to outstanding; the majority of the sessions observed were of a good or better standard. The outdoor education programme in the centre provides the children and young people with practical ideas that in most cases are linked well to their broader education. The young people pay due attention

to their care and safety while engaged in the activities. In the best practice, the instructors relate very well with the young people, combining good humour and patience with high expectations of young people's behaviour and application. The young people make most progress when they are challenged through the constructive feedback given by the instructors.

4.2.4 The standard programme for primary schools varies in length between two or five days and one or two evenings for week-end groups. In the primary school programmes the children work in small groups following different activities often linked together in an arrangement that allows everyone to try each activity. The centre also offers flexibility and the user organisations negotiate changes to suit the needs of specific groups, for example activities that suit young people with learning needs and with disabilities.

4.2.5 There are good links between most of the schools and the centre. However, not all of the schools develop the programme activities further when the young people return to school; in these cases the long-term benefits could be lost. In one session observed a beach walk linked clearly with the curriculum area of the world around us. There is recent evidence that instructors are receiving training on the youth work curriculum to enhance the outcomes for the young people and young adults on the central theme and core principles of that curriculum; the Inspectorate would endorse this development.

4.2.6 The feedback from teachers and pupils interviewed and the post-course written feedback are very positive. The evaluations are too general and focus too much on the activities rather than on the outcomes for the young people. Consequently they do not inform future planning sufficiently.

4.2.7 The quality of the pastoral care is very good. The well-developed policies and procedures guide the work of the instructors and staff well; there is a comprehensive risk management process in place.

4.3 SAFEGUARDING

The centre has satisfactory arrangements in place for the safeguarding of children and young people. These arrangements broadly reflect the guidance issued by DE, but the following areas need to be addressed: the centre needs to ensure that the designated and deputy designated staff members receive updated training; and, that all parents are informed of the safeguarding policy and the complaints procedure.

4.4 LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The quality of leadership and management is good.

4.4.1 The efficient and collaborative staff team manage the centre effectively. The warden, supported well by the instructors, administration and ancillary staff, provides very good management of the day-to-day programmes. The senior education officer and administration team have a well-developed booking system; the accommodation and resources are maintained to a high standard.

4.4.2 The suitably qualified and highly experienced instructors work well with the teachers and youth workers in leading and managing effectively the groups who attend the centre.

4.4.3 The senior youth officer monitors the work of the centre and provides good support to the warden through regular formal and informal meetings; an agreed system of target monitoring guides the supervision process. In the last twelve months, the centre has exceeded several of the agreed targets including occupancy rates.

4.4.4 The monitoring, evaluation and analysis of the learning outcomes for the young people are underdeveloped. The centre does not exploit fully the good working relationships between the teachers and instructors; with more focused collaboration it can develop further the potential for tackling underachievement and supporting the formal curriculum. The current development plan does not include enough details of how the activities and programmes match the current formal and non-formal educational priorities. It needs to be more focused to guide the future work of the centre.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 In most of the areas inspected the overall quality of provision in this centre is good. The quality of the pastoral care is very good. The centre has important strengths in most of its education and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified an area for improvement which the centre has demonstrated the capacity to address. The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor the centre's progress on the area for improvement.

5.2 AREA FOR IMPROVEMENT

The approaches to the monitoring and evaluation of the learning outcomes for the young people and the processes for self-evaluation leading to improvement are underdeveloped. The operational and strategic plans need to lay out more clearly how the current and new initiatives will be planned for, agreed and implemented.

APPENDIX

Table 1: Total attendance

Age group	4-9		10-15		16-18		19 +		TOTAL
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	
2008/09	126	104	758	923	144	108	34	21	2218
2009/10	86	91	993	966	175	117	45	33	2506
2010/11	171	115	968	855	99	104	22	15	2349
2011/12	99	85	948	831	157	173	31	23	2347

Table 2: Number of Schools using the OE Centre

Year	Controlled Primary	Maintained Primary	Controlled Secondary	Maintained Secondary	Total
2008-09	27	10	14	7	58
2009-10	27	12	16	13	68
2010- 11	34	9	12	11	66
2011-12	30	12	6	7	55

Table 3: Number of Youth Organisations using the OE Centre

Year	Controlled	Voluntary	Uniform	Total
2008-09	8	23	19	40
2009-10	12	26	16	54
2010-11	10	23	15	48
2011-12	14	21	16	51

Table 4: Percentage (%) return bookings over the last three years

Year	Youth organisations	Primary Schools	Post Primary Schools
2009-10	41.6%	60%	46%
2010-11	39.5%	72%	85%
2011-12	48%	90%	100%

Table 5: Leadership training in the last twelve months

Title of course including accreditation details	Number of young people enrolled	Number of adults enrolled	Percentage successfully completing
Hill-walking level 2	NA	16	100%
Trainee Outdoor leader course	NA	11	54%
REC first aid course	NA	16	100%
REC First aid course for youth workers in the different SELB divisions.		60	100%
Armagh schools GCSE orienteering event	600	NA	100%
Newry Division orienteering project	164	NA	100%

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