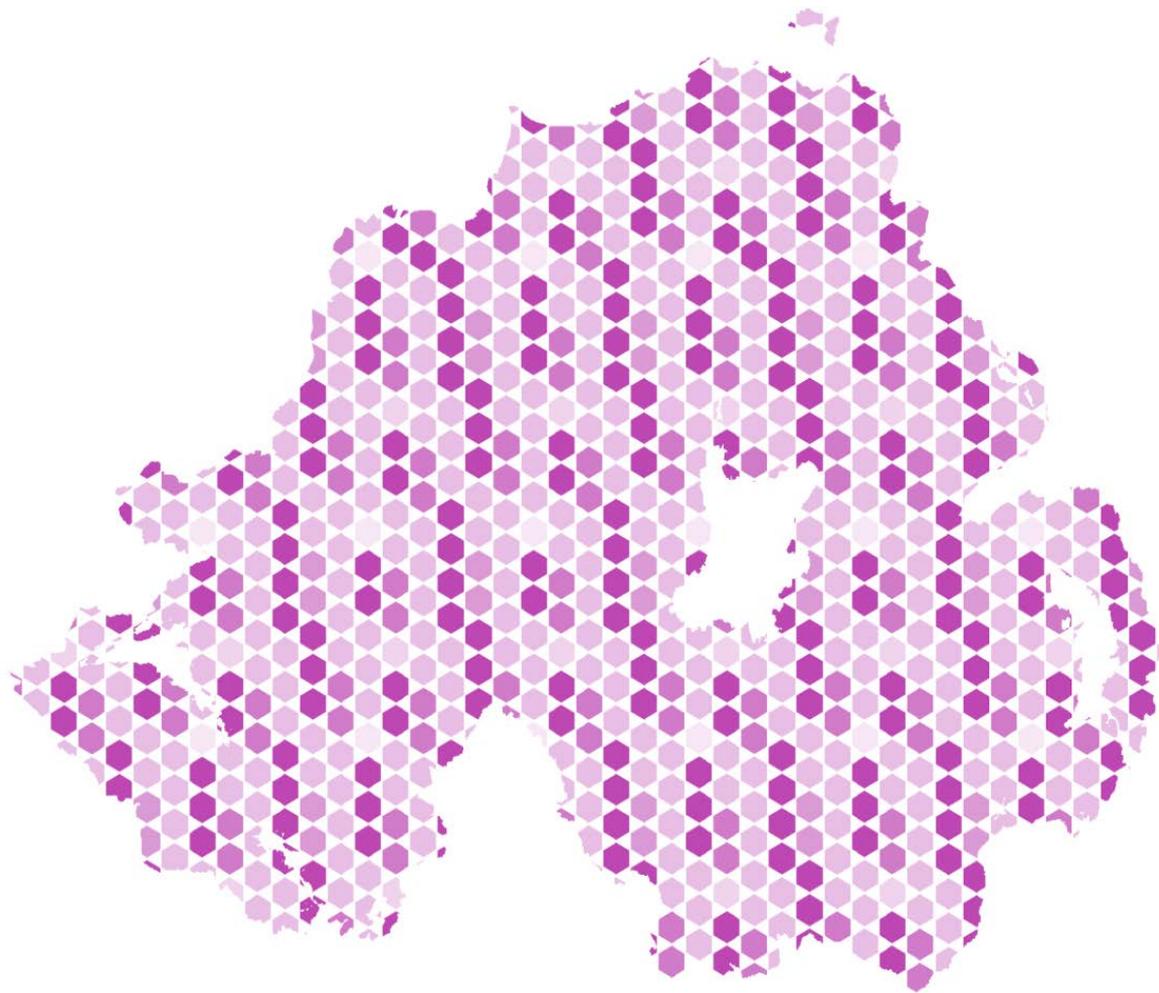


CULTURE, ARTS AND LEISURE INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

An Evaluation of the Training
Provision for Teachers and Youth
Leaders in Digital Technologies
provided by the Creative
Learning Centres

June 2013-March 2014



Providing Inspection Services for

Department of Education
Department for Employment and Learning
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

CUSTOMER
SERVICE
EXCELLENCE



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. Evaluation method and evidence base

The key questions and quality indicators which guide inspection and self-evaluation of bodies funded by the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL), which were applied to this evaluation, are available in the Education and Training Inspectorate's (ETI) publication, Quality Indicators for Culture Arts and Leisure Organisations¹.

2. Context

The three Creative Learning Centres (CLCs) in Northern Ireland, namely the Armagh Multi Media Access Centre (AmmA), the Nerve Centre, Londonderry and Nerve Belfast (formerly Studio-ON), under the leadership of Northern Ireland Screen, have been providing training in e-learning and digital media to teachers, youth leaders, youth groups, schools and learners at risk of disengagement since the inception of the CLCs' Education Strategy in 2003. The three CLCs have been funded by DCAL through an agreed delivery plan with Northern Ireland Screen in support of the six high level outcomes in the Government Pledge of 2006.² Over the period 2010-2013, the CLCs have offered training and support to 966 schools, 7,229 teachers and trainers and have engaged with 15,568 young people.

The ETI carried out an evaluation of the work of the CLCs between June 2013 and March 2014. A team of four inspectors visited a range of training activities facilitated by the CLCs, spoke to staff in schools and interviewed staff from the University of Ulster at Coleraine involved in an initial teacher education pilot programme on the use of i-Pads to support teaching and learning. The inspectors also scrutinised documentation provided by the centres and by Northern Ireland Screen, and held discussions with the CLC staff members, teachers, youth workers and pupils in schools. This evaluation builds on previous evaluations carried out by the ETI in 2006, 2007, 2008 and 2011.³

3. Focus of evaluation

The evaluation focused on:

- the impact of the training received on learning opportunities, in relation to the use of digital technology, provided in schools and youth organisations;
- best practice examples of learning opportunities at primary and post-primary level based on the training received that could be used as beacons to inspire and support others; and
- recommendations to improve the participation rates in training in 'cold spots' and the effective dissemination and application of best practice to enhance learning opportunities and the integration of digital technologies into the curriculum.

¹ <http://www.etini.gov.uk/index/support-material/support-material-department-of-culture-arts-and-leisure/quality-indicators-for-culture-arts-leisure-organisations.pdf>

² Our Children and Young People – Our Pledge: A Ten Year Strategy for Children and Young People in Northern Ireland 2006-2016.

³ The Work of AmmA. The Armagh Multi Media Access Creative Learning Centre, ETI. March 2006
The Nerve Centre, Derry, ETI. October 2007

An Evaluation of the Creative Learning Centres funded through the Children and Young People Package, ETI. February 2008

An Evaluation of the Promotion of Critical Skills as part of a Wider Literacy through four Organisations funded by Northern Ireland Screen, ETI. January 2012

This report also evaluated:

- the achievements and standards;
- the quality of the provision; and
- the quality of the leadership and management, including the processes for self-evaluation leading towards improvement.

4. Overall finding

Overall Effectiveness	Very Good
Achievements and Standards	Good
Provision	Very Good
Leadership and Management	Very Good

5. Achievements and standards

The partnership arrangements between schools, youth organisations and the CLCs work well. Almost all of the participants talked positively about the development of their technical skills relevant to their practice. They also report increased ability and confidence in their use of technology to enhance the young people's learning.

The training sessions provided for teachers and youth workers created good opportunities for the practical application of new skills and effective one-to-one support to help them to embed the new knowledge and understanding into their practice and to promote effective connections across the curriculum. The training provided by a range of CLC staff, including those with employment experience in the media, entertainment and technology industries provides significant enhancements to the teachers' and youth workers' range of experiences and skills.

In the best practice observed, the teachers, who had availed of the training, used technology to motivate, engage and excite their pupils' curiosity in learning and discovery. Almost all of the pupils were highly responsive to the good range of teaching strategies deployed as a direct result of the training provided to teachers by the CLCs. The pupils were able to discuss their learning with their teachers, the inspectors and one another. There was clear development of the pupils' talking, listening, independent research and presentational skills for a variety of audiences. Good opportunities were provided for the development of their critical thinking and evaluative skills in relation to their own work and the work of their peers. Almost all of the pupils demonstrated a high degree of confidence in using their new skills across a range of settings and curriculum areas. While the achievements and standards are good, there is a need for the CLCs to evaluate more robustly the impact of technology-enhanced learning on measurable improvements in the standards and outcomes of the young people.

6. Provision

There are effective planning processes in place between the CLCs and the organisations with whom they work. As a result, clear training goals are identified and appropriate individualised training is put in place to address the needs of the teachers, youth workers and young people. The CLCs organise and run a wide variety of support and development programmes for teachers and youth workers, many of which are in direct response to requests for training in specific areas of expertise. The Nerve Centre in Derry, for example, has developed a bespoke programme for young people working in an economically-challenged environment to help them to use digital technology creatively to support their learning and to develop their career choices.

All of the training sessions observed were effective in meeting the training needs of the teachers and youth workers. The sessions offered appropriate levels of support and good levels of challenge which enhanced and developed the skills and competences necessary to extend young people's learning opportunities. In one twilight session offered by Nerve Belfast, for example, teachers developed skills in the creation of educationally-focused computer games in order to engage more effectively with male post-primary pupils at risk of disaffection. The teachers involved reported positive impacts on pupil engagement; effective development of the pupils' creativity and problem-solving skills; and an increased willingness to communicate enthusiastically about their learning. The training impacted well on the quality of the provision observed in the schools' settings; overall this provision was very good.

In the most effective practice observed, dynamic partnerships were developed across schools. One initiative, for example, brought 19 schools, 40 teachers and 900 children together to celebrate their local history and culture through an animation project. The children explored the historical and cultural evidence through specifically designed software and then demonstrated their learning and technical skills in the creation of short films. The children's work was celebrated with public screenings as part of the UK City of Culture 2013. The staff from the CLC provided well-planned training and created appropriate curriculum resources to guide the work of the teachers through each aspect of the programme.

Within their provision, the CLCs work consistently to promote inclusion. The CLC staff work across a wide range of schools and other social settings. The Nerve Centre in Derry, for example, has supported one school to develop the use of i-Pads to enhance learning. As a result of the partnership, the school has, as part of their school development planning and target setting process, identified actions relating to the effective use of digital technologies to raise standards.

In a further example of best practice, a teacher was supported to construct "YouTube" video clips to demonstrate, for pupils, differentiated problem-solving approaches in mathematics. The pupils were able to use the resource to develop their problem-solving skills through a range of further challenges prepared by the teacher. During the subsequent timetabled mathematics sessions, pupils were asked to articulate and to demonstrate their new learning. This example, of innovative and engaging practice, supported and encouraged high levels of pupil participation and effective development of independent learning skills beyond the classroom.

The CLCs continue to develop their range of provision to increase the geographic reach of their training opportunities and engage effectively with new initiatives. The Nerve Centre in Derry, for example, is developing practical applications of the STEAM⁴ model to engage teachers and learners in the adoption of emerging technologies. The Nerve Centre has also formed useful links with, and supported an innovative pilot programme, with the School of Education at the University of Ulster Coleraine to provide training and support to students undertaking the post-graduate certificate in education. The programme is designed to provide training to develop the use of mobile technology devices in the student teachers' teaching and learning, and subsequently in their pupils' learning.

The CLCs engage appropriately with a wide range of organisations across diverse social and geographical settings. There are, however, a number of organisations where poor internet connectivity and insufficient resourcing have led to 'cold spots' in terms of the uptake of training. More remains to be done to support greater uptake in these areas and to facilitate the sharing of best practice.

7. Leadership and management

The quality of the leadership and the management of the CLCs by Northern Ireland Screen, and within each of the three centres, is highly effective. The CLCs, together with Northern Ireland Screen, work strategically and cohesively to provide training which is responsive to need, and have developed and fostered productive partnerships with a wide range of schools, youth organisations and external agencies. In particular, the CLCs have formed strong links with a range of key stakeholders and national initiatives including the British Film Institute, local councils and the UK City of Culture for 2013. There are also good links with the Council for Curriculum Examinations and Assessment (CCEA); the staff of the CLCs have informed curriculum development in subject areas such as Moving Image Arts, history and computer programming.

The planning for the delivery of the training in digital technologies across the formal and informal curriculum is comprehensive and innovative and the curriculum takes good account of the Programme for Government's key priorities for the period 2011-16.

From the inception of the CLCs' Education Strategy in 2003, the centres have demonstrated a sound commitment to actively re-engaging young people from less-advantaged backgrounds and those at risk of exclusion from the benefits of education. Although not always explicitly stated in all of their documentation, the targeting of social need is an evident priority which is embedded in their planning and delivery. A key strength is the use of a suitably broad definition of disadvantage which includes social, intergenerational, economic and cultural dimensions. In this context all of the CLCs make a significant and effective contribution to tackling disadvantage. The AmmA Centre, for example, has formed productive links with schools within the Neighbourhood Renewal Programmes to develop and embed programmes to help pupils to get the most out of their educational experiences and to re-engage with their own learning.

All three CLCs have been responsive to the findings of external evaluations and have worked effectively to review the relevance of the programmes offered; the quality of the training provided; the learning and skills development; and the level of involvement and engagement of the teachers and youth workers. The CLCs now engage more effectively with self-evaluation in line with the Quality Indicators for Culture Arts and Leisure organisations. There is still room for improvement, however, in the ongoing evaluation of the impact of the training offered by the CLCs in terms of measurable pupils' outcomes.

⁴ STEAM Science, technology, engineering, art, mathematics

The evidence from the evaluation indicates that not all schools are planning effectively for the inclusion of technology-enhanced learning across the curriculum. References to technology-enhanced learning are not embedded sufficiently in the development planning of all schools, and there are too few targets set for the development of innovative, technology-based strategies to support, monitor and evaluate pupils' learning and progression. There is also insufficient evidence of the evaluation of the positive impact of digital technologies on pupils' learning at whole school level. The work of the CLCs to date demonstrates that they are strategically placed to continue to support schools to facilitate more effective technology-based collaboration across the curriculum, and across a wide range of learning settings. The CLCs now need to develop their role to support schools in this wider collaborative context through the use of digital technologies by uniting pupils in their learning across a variety of boundaries. In using technology to link pupils across transition stages, the potential for increased collaboration between schools, especially where technology-based learning is at an early stage, can be intensified.

8. Recommendations

The Creative Learning Centres should:

- continue to support schools and youth organisations to plan systematically for the further embedding of emerging technologies to support effectively individual pupil learning and progression;
- develop further inter-schools, technology-based, learning opportunities which minimise the boundaries between learners in socially and educationally advantaged settings and those learners in less-advantaged settings to improve overall achievements; and
- develop further the self-evaluation and quality improvement planning processes to focus more sharply on helping schools to raise standards and achievements through innovative and creative approaches to pupils' learning.

9. Conclusion

In the areas evaluated, the quality of the provision of the Creative Learning Centres is very good.

Schools involved in the evaluation of the Creative Learning Centres

Bangor Central Integrated Primary School
Cumran Primary School
Kells and Connor Primary School
Kilronan School, Magherafelt
Omagh County Primary School
Sacred Heart Primary School
Sandalford Special School
St Brendan's Primary School Moyraverty

Bangor Grammar School
Carrickfergus Grammar School
Castlederg High School
Lisneal College, Londonderry
St Malachy's Grammar School
Thornhill Grammar School, Derry

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