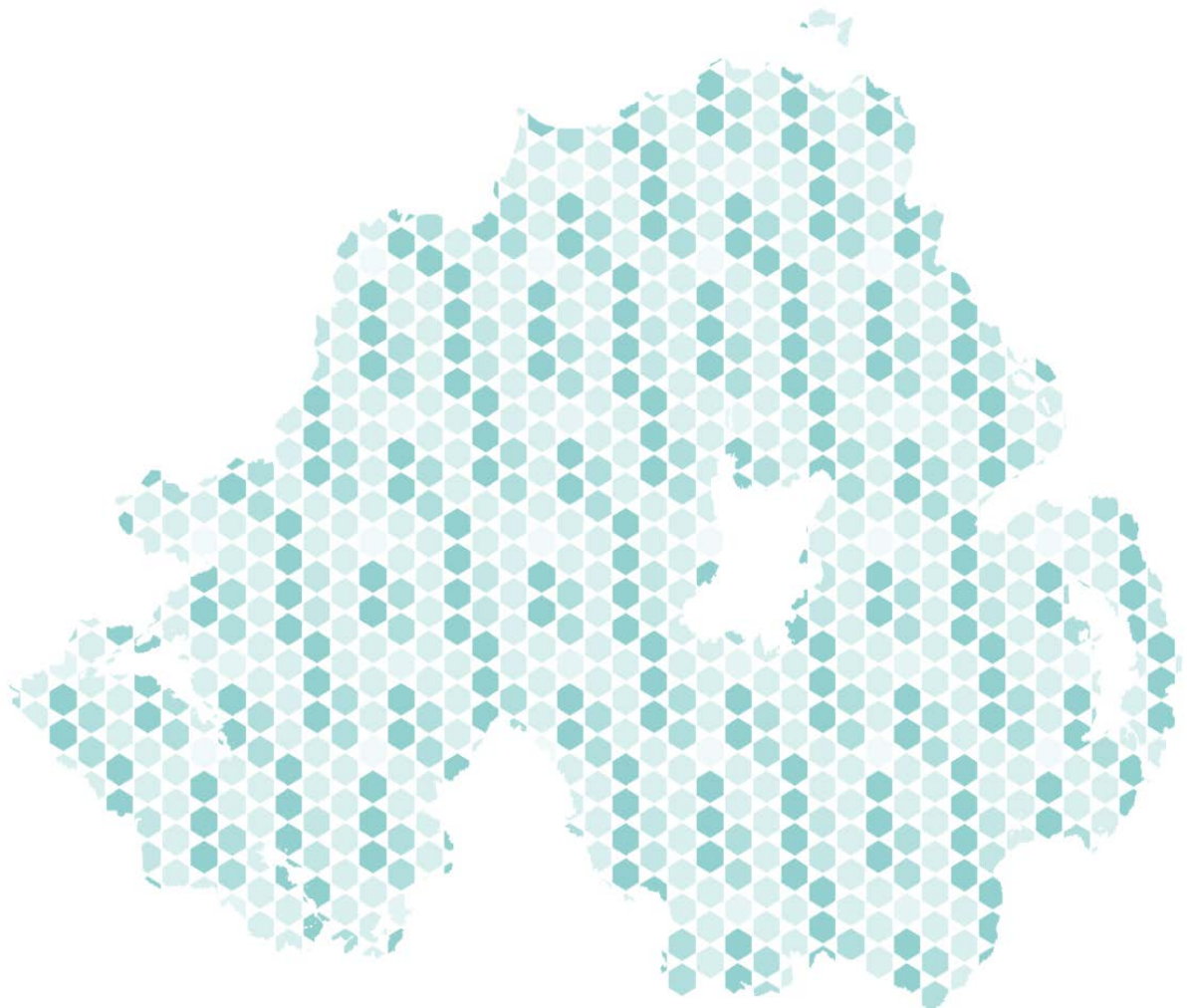


# YOUTH INSPECTION



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

Catholic Guides of Ireland,  
Northern Region

Report of an Inspection in  
February 2014



Providing Inspection Services for

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



## 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. Context

The 'Catholic Guides of Ireland Northern Region' is one of five voluntary regional groups that make up the Catholic Guides of Ireland National Association. The Northern Region was established in 1992 and restructured in 2006 following extensive planning and consultation within the dioceses. The region now includes the six counties of Northern Ireland and county Donegal and is divided into three areas: Errigal, Lagan and Cathedral.<sup>1</sup> Each area is co-ordinated by an Area Commissioner and supported by officer bearers, and contributes to the overall development and direction of the association.

The Northern Region is managed by an Executive Officer assisted by a full-time and part-time administrator; her work is supervised and supported by a recently appointed Executive Board. The Executive Board is assisted by teams with specific responsibilities including safeguarding and training.<sup>2</sup>

The organisation is open to all women and girls; there are currently 25 units within the region, and within each unit there individual sections: Cygnets aged 4-6, Brigin aged 7-10, Guides aged 11-14, Rangers aged 14-19 and young leaders aged 17-25. The total membership at the time of the inspection was 1223.<sup>3</sup>

The Northern Region receives funding towards running costs and staffing from the Youth Council for Northern Ireland as a Regional Voluntary Headquarter Organisation; this is monitored through an agreed annual service level agreement. Individual units are eligible to register with the local Education and Library Board and apply for funding under the youth service support scheme and can avail of support services and training opportunities.

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<sup>1</sup> Appendix 1

<sup>2</sup> Appendix 2

<sup>3</sup> Appendix 3

## 2. Focus of inspection

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 processes for self-evaluation leading to improvement.

## 3. Overall finding

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Very good</b>
<b>Achievements and standards</b>	<b>Very good</b>
<b>Provision</b>	<b>Very good</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>Very good</b>

## 4. Achievements and standards

- The young people participate in a wide range of relevant programmes well matched to their identified needs and interests. They consistently demonstrate high levels of enjoyment, commitment and motivation and develop their self-confidence and self-esteem through their progression and acquisition of an appropriate range of skills, attitudes and dispositions; including active listening, team work, planning and problem-solving. They demonstrate initiative, creativity and the ability to research relevant issues, and apply their learning well to new

situations. For example, during the 'thinking day' event the young people presented key information about how their formal education experiences compared with those in other countries.

- In almost all of the sessions the young people work effectively together displaying very good working relationships and a caring attitude towards one another. They listen carefully to instructions, learn from one another and maintain high standards of work. The Guides and Rangers play a key role in supporting the Cygnets and Brigin. For example, in one session literacy was promoted effectively through a shared reading programme where the young people demonstrated high levels of talking and listening. The young people respond well to the views of others and contribute confidently and competently to group discussions.
- The young people's achievements are celebrated and recognised very effectively through the wide range of badge work and awards including, the Chief Commissioners Award, the Millennium Volunteers Award, and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. Through participating in these awards the young people extend their learning and personal development, and where appropriate prepare to assume leadership roles.
- Recently, 48 young people from across the organisation achieved accreditation in a Community Relations, Equity and Diversity programme. This resulted in their increased understanding of different cultures in Northern Ireland and in building relationships with others from different backgrounds. Through well-planned teamwork they increased their understanding and skills in the process of

reconciliation including the complexities of identity, including dual British and Irish identities.

- The young people are open and positive to volunteering and participate readily in a range of activities linked to the association and their community, in particular fund raising for a range of local and international charities.

## **5. Provision**

- The volunteers are dedicated and give their time willingly beyond the scheduled meeting nights. They plan effectively together to provide the young people with positive learning and recreational experiences through the award and badge work. There is a highly effective focus on personalised learning and the positive reinforcement enables the young people to overcome any potential barriers to their learning. The volunteers make very good use of the sometimes limited space and facilities, in a range of church and community halls in urban and rural communities.
- All of the sessions observed ranged from good to outstanding; over one-half were very good or better. In the best practice, the volunteers demonstrate very good facilitation and organisational skills; they support each other very well and make the best use of their considerable expertise and knowledge to deliver a responsive programme that takes into account what is current and relevant to the young people and their community.
- The organisation has recently reformed an executive members committee who were elected through a representative and consultative process and are

contributing well to the life and work of the organisation. The young people's involvement contributes significantly to their personal and social development, and they are using the skills they develop effectively in other contexts including further education and employment.

- The association's mission statement<sup>4</sup> is evident throughout the life and work of the organisation. The quality of the pastoral care at all levels demonstrated clearly that the volunteers are highly committed to the ethos of the Catholic Guides of Ireland and to young people in their care. The young people spoke positively about the sense of belonging, the long-lasting friendships, the high level of care and support, and their enjoyment of the exciting and stimulating programmes. During the informal discussions held with the young people they informed members of the inspection team that they feel safe in their units and are aware of what to do if they have any concerns about their safety and well-being.

## **6. Leadership and management**

- The Northern Region's Executive Board provides high quality leadership and strategic direction to the organisation to raise the standards of provision, and demonstrates a commitment to excellence and quality improvement at all levels. Through a detailed consultative and reflective process the organisation has agreed wide-ranging operational objectives and strategic aims and priorities that will guide the direction of the organisation until 2016.

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<sup>4</sup> "to raise the ambition and skills of girls and young women that enable them to flourish, through progressive, challenging and structured programmes and international opportunities that build life and leadership skills and promote active citizenship"



- The volunteers are recruited from the local area; almost all of them have been members of the association. They have the flexibility and expertise to respond to the needs and interests identified by the young people. Whenever a pertinent social issue has been identified, outside agencies are used to provide bespoke training and relevant information. For example, the organisation has made good use of the Public Initiative to Prevent Suicide (PIPS) to raise suicide awareness, and also the Belfast Education and Library Board to help manage challenging behaviour.
- There are clear management and operational structures and all of the volunteers who hold management positions are clear about their roles and responsibilities. The Executive Board are actively involved in the organisation as volunteers and provide a high standard of governance. In conjunction with the five other main uniformed organisations in Northern Ireland they have developed relevant online governance training. The region maintains effective communication with the national association and makes a valuable contribution to ongoing developments.
- The organisation gives high priority to promoting Community Relations, Equity and Diversity (CRED) in the strategic development plan, including prioritising training for volunteers. The organisation collaborates successfully with other uniformed organisations in developing accredited CRED programmes. Seven volunteers have successfully completed Open College Network Level 2 Contributing in a Divided Society. In addition, resources are developed collaboratively to support volunteers in developing the facilitation skills and methodologies to handle controversial issues, and badge work has been devised to embed this key work clearly in the programmes. A key strength of the

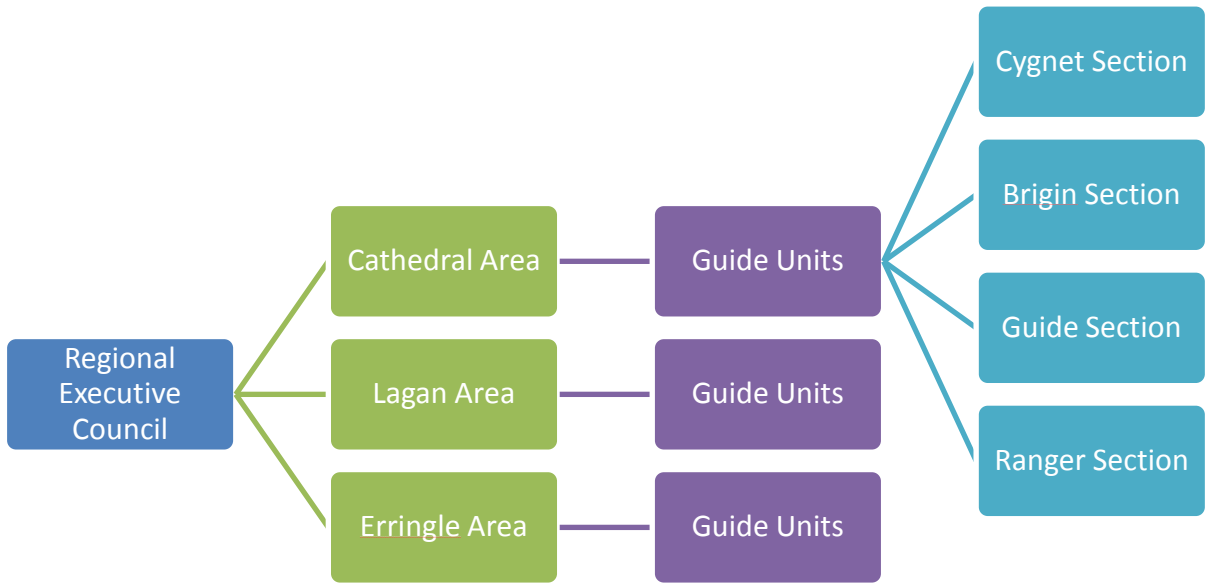
programme is how the volunteers learn alongside the young people through the external facilitation of the practical sessions.

- The Northern Region provides appropriate and continuous mandatory and optional training: including programme and leadership training, safeguarding, first aid and outdoor skills. The training supports effectively the volunteers' needs and is evident in the development and management of national and international programmes. A number of the volunteers have also completed an accredited course for trainers with their counterparts in the national association.
- The organisation makes effective use of social media and a well developed website to advertise and communicate with members of their local community, nationally and internationally.
- There is good evidence of an agreed and understood coherent structure for self-evaluation at area and regional level. Each unit maintains a record of the young people's achievements as they progress through each section of the organisation. However, the organisation's collation and use of data to inform improvement is underdeveloped.
- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the centre has satisfactory arrangements for safeguarding children and young people. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education but the following areas needs to be addressed; there is a need to ensure that all parents are aware of the safeguarding arrangements, in particular the arrangements for the younger children leaving the units; and that the reporting officers and contact details are clearly displayed in all units.

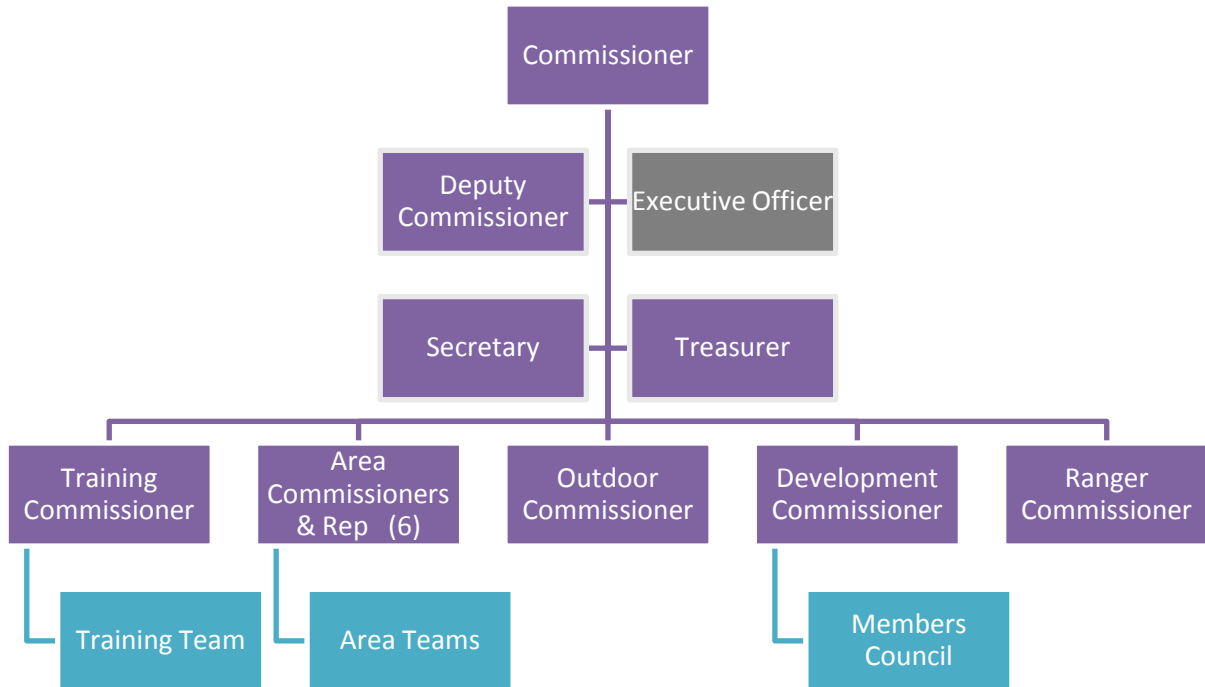
## **7. Conclusion**

In the areas inspected, the quality of the overall provision for the young people is very good. The Catholic Guides of Ireland Northern Region is meeting very effectively the educational and pastoral needs of the learners; and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

**APPENDIX 1**



Executive Board and Teams



**APPENDIX 3****Total membership**

	Cygnets 4-6	Brigini 7-10	Guides 11-14	Rangers 14-19	Young Leaders 17-25	Total
2010/11	249	789	333	72	62	1443
2011/12	304	713	317	90	76	1500
2012/13	230	704	320	83	60	1397
Current	214	635	237	82	55	1223

**Health and safety**

In some locations the premises present a health and safety risk, including:

- limited toilet facilities;
- lack of outside lighting; and
- sharing the premises with other users.

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