

ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION PROVISION INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Downpatrick Alternative
Education Provision

Report of an Inspection in
March 2014



*The Education and Training Inspectorate -
Promoting Improvement*

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. 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 young people and staff. The arrangements for this inspection included:

- meetings with groups 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	15	7	47%	6
Teachers	5	5	100%	*
Support Staff	*	*	*	*

* fewer than 5

The ETI is trialling a range of methods for collecting the views of parents/carers about the life and work of the school. As a result, the response rate to the parent/carer questionnaires may be low.

All of the parental questionnaire responses are very positive. The parents value the progress made by their children and the supportive ethos throughout the centre. The teacher and support staff questionnaire responses are positive and indicate strong support for the centre; however all of the responses state that the accommodation is too limited to meet the needs of the young people.

2. Context

The Downpatrick Alternative Education Provision (AEP) provides education for up to two years for 15 young people with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties at key stage 4 as part of the South Eastern Education and Library Board (SEELB) Education Other Than At School service. The young people are referred to the service through the SEELB referral system or through the statement review process. The Downpatrick centre is staffed by a senior youth worker who is the centre co-ordinator, a teacher for mathematics, a teacher for English, and two learning support assistants; there is an additional part-time teacher for art and a part-time counsellor. The head of service for AEP in the SEELB has overall responsibility for the centre and usually spends one day each week on-site. The centre is located within the Ardmore House school buildings and has limited accommodation and facilities with no outdoor space. The premises are also shared with the SEELB Education Welfare Service who occupy an office and interview rooms.

Downpatrick AEP	20010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Enrolment	12	7	15	15
% Attendance	73%	62%	79%	68%
FSME Percentage ¹	83%	73%	80%	87%
No. of newcomers	*	*	*	*

Source: data as held by the school.

* fewer than 5

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

3. Focus of inspection

The inspection focused on:

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

4. Overall finding

Overall Performance Level	Good
Achievements and Standards	Very good
Provision	Very good
Leadership and Management	Good

Key findings of the inspection

5. Achievements and standards

- Most of the young people have histories of non attendance and disrupted schooling. The average attendance of the 15 young people in the centre from September 2013 is 68%, including three young people who do not attend at present. The centre data indicates that most of the young people have improved their attendance significantly since coming to the centre.
- Most of the young people make very good progress in their learning and respond well to the individual learning and teaching strategies provided. The centre data indicates that most young people who attend on a regular basis achieve well and obtain sufficient qualifications to enable transition to study courses of their choice.
- The centre has in place an effective system of rewards and incentives which encourages successfully the young people to achieve, engage and to take responsibility for their own actions.
- The young people follow an appropriate range of up to eight accredited courses which are commensurate with their needs and aptitudes. The courses available include English, communication and mathematics (numeracy) GCSE and Entry level, Certificate in Personal Effectiveness, information and communication technology accreditation, occupational studies and the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme.
- The young people have completed successfully a range of voluntary projects with conservation volunteers in the local community to turn wasteland into productive garden allotments.

6. Provision

- The quality of teaching in the lessons observed and the young peoples' learning experiences were consistently very good. The young people are provided with a balanced curriculum which reflects their interests and social and emotional needs. There is a good pace to the lessons with very good individual support and differentiated programmes; targets for the young people are shared appropriately with them and reviewed each week.
- The teachers' planning and evaluations are robust and focus clearly on the individual needs of the young people; in the best practice the young people's work is marked well for improvement. English and mathematics are given a high profile in the centre and the curriculum areas are effectively co-ordinated by teachers and youth workers across the SEELB, AEP service.
- The staff are committed to the holistic development of the young people and support them and their families well during their placements in the centre; the learning support assistants help and encourage the young people effectively with sensitivity and skill.
- The young people use a range of information and communication technology (ICT) successfully throughout their learning and most gain accreditation for their skills; the ICT provision is currently being updated.
- The provision for careers education, information and guidance is very good; the young people can avail of mock interviews, work experience placements and are supported in developing a personal career plan by the careers advisory service. The centre staff track effectively the individual progress of the young people after their placement is complete. The centre's data indicates that most of the young people transition to further education or training placements of their choice.
- The centre's accommodation is cramped and insufficient for the maximum number of 15 young people; a small number of health and safety issues are identified for attention, (see Appendix). The lack of outdoor facilities for the young people inhibits opportunities for the young people to calm, relax or engage in outdoor activities.
- The pastoral care in the centre is of a very high quality. This is evidenced by the supportive, inclusive family ethos which permeates the centre and the strong teamwork among all the adults. The centre has good links with a range of support agencies who contribute effectively to the young people's holistic development. In discussions with the young people, they stated that they are happy in the centre, have good working relationships with the staff but would value the provision of some outdoor space. In the best practice, one of the senior staff from a referring school visits regularly to ensure that the pastoral and academic needs of their young person are being met; the young people stated that they would value similar visits to re-establish effective links with their former schools
- The centre gives good attention to promoting healthy eating, however there is a lack of facilities for most sports, physical activities or home economics at the centre; the young people have opportunities to take part in a community allotment scheme and archery.

7. Leadership and management

- The management of the centre provides effective leadership and clear direction in achieving good quality education and support for the young people. The management communicate effectively with members of staff, parents and carers, and a range of outside agencies to ensure an efficient and effective exchange of information including the progress made by the young people.
- The staff, led by the centre co-ordinator, maintain very good monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of the provision on the young people's learning and behaviour.
- The centre has developed strong partnerships with outside organisations, including the SEELB educational psychology service, youth workers, Stranmillis University College and Queens University, Belfast which develops and informs further the provision. Additional partnerships with local further education institutions to provide vocational education courses would enhance the curriculum and vocational choices available to the young people.
- The educational site currently accommodates two educational provisions and the educational welfare service; it is timely to review this arrangement in order that each centre is provided with sufficient accommodation and outdoor space to maximize the potential of all the resources and meet more effectively the needs of all of the young people, staff, parents and visitors.
- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the centre has comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding young people; these arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education. In discussions with the young people, they stated that they feel safe and know who to speak to if they have any concerns about their well-being.

8. Conclusion

In the areas inspected, the quality of the education provided by this centre is good and the pastoral care is very good. The centre has important strengths in most of its educational provision. The inspection has identified an area for improvement which the centre, in collaboration with SEELB, has demonstrated the capacity to address. This is to improve:

- the accommodation to provide a more suitable environment that can meet more effectively the needs of young people.

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) will monitor the centre's progress on the area for improvement.

Accommodation

- There have been significant improvements to the fabric of the school buildings recently however the accommodation is too small for the current number of young people attending.
- The lack of suitable withdrawal rooms and facilities for the young people with challenging behaviours needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency.
- The centre is situated on a very restricted site with insufficient outdoor leisure space or grounds to enable the young people with behavioural issues to calm and relax.
- The school car park is inadequate for the number of users using the site.
- 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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