

ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION PROVISION INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Loughshore Education
Resource Centre, Belfast

Report of an Inspection in
March 2014

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 peoples' written work and held formal and informal discussions with young people, teachers and staff with specific responsibilities.

The arrangements for this inspection included:

- a meeting with representatives from the management group;
- meetings with 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	50	25	50	10
Teachers	22	14	63	8
Support Staff	19	18	94	8

* fewer than 5

Almost all of the parental questionnaire responses are positive. The parents value the progress made by the young people and the caring and supportive ethos throughout the centre. The additional comments were very supportive and positive of the staff and centre. The teacher and support staff questionnaire responses were very positive, and indicate strong support for the head of centre and the work of the centre. The Education and Training inspectorate reported to the head of centre and management group the small number of areas of concern emerging from the questionnaires and where appropriate, these have been commented on within the report.

2. Context

Loughshore Education Resource Centre is situated in the Shore Road area of north Belfast and provides education for young people with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties from all post primary schools in the Belfast Education and Library Board area (BELB) including some special schools. At the time of inspection there were 78 young people enrolled. The provision is managed by a head of centre, a deputy and three senior teachers. The head of centre reports to a management group of three senior BELB officers. The centre operates an open enrolment system which is administered by the education options panel of the BELB and young people may also be referred through the statement review process.

Loughshore Education Resource Centre	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/2014
Enrolment	104	95	96	78
% Attendance (NI Average)	80	77	79.8	-
FSME Percentage ¹	88.4	70.5	66.6	
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 peoples' 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 make very good progress in their education and behaviour despite coming to the centre with histories of social and emotional or behaviour difficulty, disrupted education and school absence. Almost all of the young people have special educational needs and require additional support with aspects of their learning; an increasing number have complex and multiple learning difficulties. The majority of the young people have improved their attendance, the data indicating 72 percent having improved their attendance since coming to Loughshore.
- The programme for literacy is individually tailored to the needs of each young person and focused on their interests; as a result, the young people are, for the most part, engaged in their learning and respond well to the individual learning and teaching strategies.
- The young people demonstrate progression in their understanding of mathematical concepts. All of the young people gain a recognised qualification in English, communication and mathematics (numeracy) at GCSE or entry level by the time they leave Loughshore. Seven young people obtained qualifications in GCSE English Language and mathematics, the others gained accreditation in functional skills communication and numeracy. Almost ninety percent of the young people gained level one accreditation in an appropriate range of courses including occupational studies examinations for example, construction, business and services, design and creativity, contemporary cuisine, carpentry and joinery, animal care, growing plants sustainably, painting and decorating. Seventy-six percent of the young people obtained five or more passes in GCSE and occupational studies examinations at grades A to G.

- The young people achieve good levels of competence in the use of Information Communication Technology (ICT) across a number of subjects. When given the opportunity most of the young people can use ICT independently and enjoy using devices such as iPads and interactive whiteboards to enhance their learning experiences.

6. Provision

- The quality of interaction between young people and staff is generally very good, with mutual respect and tolerance a key feature. The ethos of the centre promotes positive working relations between young people and staff. The staff implement clear boundaries for acceptable behaviour and sanctions which are used appropriately. Challenging Incidents, including aggressive behaviours are effectively managed by the senior staff who have clear protocols on how to deal with such incidents which on occasion can be very serious. The staff need to be mindful of the need to maintain a constant focus on training to ensure they keep both themselves and young people safe: further training in managing aggressive behaviour should be accessed.
- The teachers plan well for learning and the short, sharp, half hour periods are well planned to engage the young people and enable them to concentrate and focus well for purposeful periods of time. The quality of the lessons observed was good or better, with three quarters of the lessons being evaluated as very good or outstanding. In the highly effective lessons, the teachers focused on the needs and interests of the young people and were innovative in devising interesting lessons that motivated most of the young people.
- The teachers know the young people well and lessons are suitably differentiated to meet their needs. The teachers and classroom assistants work effectively together to support the young people and are flexible, tolerant and use good humour whilst encouraging and motivating them.
- Most of the young people respond positively to the small class sizes and highly individualised support. They show respect to staff who work hard to develop very good working relationships with the young people.
- The teachers have availed of a wide range of appropriate professional development and many have developed particular expertise in order to meet the extensive needs of the young people, for example in autism and challenging behaviour. The teachers would benefit from further training particularly to support pupils with specific learning difficulties (dyslexia).
- The accommodation is used inappropriately and is insufficient for the number of young people who attend. Classrooms, for example, are used to teach three separate groups of young people by different staff. In discussions with inspectors the young people reported that other pupils making noise or displaying disengaged behaviour disrupt their learning. (Appendix)

- Literacy has a high profile within the centre. The young people's work is celebrated in the classrooms and in the attractive corridor displays. The learning environment throughout the centre is purposeful, stimulating and supportive. The teachers have realistically high expectations of the young people, and focus particularly on addressing their underachievement and development of literacy skills. Reading sessions, designed to reduce the stigma attached to past reading failures, are promoted successfully by the teachers.
- The catering department provide a focal point for both staff and young people to meet and enjoy lunch together and develop the skills of good social interaction. The young people are encouraged to prepare and sample healthy meals. They are provided with clear information about the importance of maintaining a well balanced diet and healthy eating habits and develop skills in catering. The catering tutor makes good use of the fresh produce provided by the horticulture department and has extended the curriculum offer to provide the young people with the opportunity to obtain accreditation in occupational studies food preparation contemporary cuisine and patisserie.
- The staff make good use of baseline assessment of mathematics and literacy to plan highly differentiated and well focused lessons. The sharing of learning intentions and success criteria by the teachers with the young people at the beginning of lessons is particularly effective.
- The young people are given excellent advice and support as they prepare for transition to further education and training. There is a good balance between vocational and academic qualifications within the accreditation opportunities. The young people are clear about the variety of career pathways open to them and staff work hard to enable them to improve their ability to access their chosen careers.
- The centre maintains careful records of the destinations of the young people who leave each year; the data indicates that most of them transition to training organisations employment or further education placements of their choice.
- The quality of pastoral care in the centre is very good and staff create a non judgemental and conducive learning environment. All of the staff consistently praise and reinforce the young people's efforts and achievements, and provide relevant additional support that enables them to engage positively with learning. The young people talk enthusiastically about the high level of care and encouragement they receive from the centre staff. In particular, they value the opportunities to participate in the range of subject areas and occupational studies. They are aware of their progress towards gaining suitable qualifications for transition to further education and employment.
- There are effective links with a wide range of support agencies. The young people state that they feel safe in the centre and are aware of what to do if they have any concerns about their safety or well-being.
- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the centre has comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding young people, which reflect broadly the guidance issued by the Department of Education.

7. Leadership and management

- The head of centre provides good leadership; she promotes a strong focus on the holistic development of the young people and encourages an ethos of care, tolerance and respect for all within the centre. She manages effectively the daily running of the centre and provides ample opportunity for staff to access continuous professional development. In addition, she has put in place effective working groups to review key aspects of the provision and make recommendations for improvement or development.
- The senior management team work effectively to manage the young people's behaviour and make good efforts to minimise the disruption to young people who are effectively engaged in learning. Whilst they have specific responsibilities the senior management should work more closely with the head of centre and be more actively involved in the overall management of the centre. They need to have a greater focus on curriculum development and monitoring of the effectiveness of learning strategies.
- The centre at present provides for a diverse range of young people from those with severe learning difficulties, moderate learning difficulties, young people with complex needs and multiple barriers to learning, autism specific learning difficulties and mental health issues and those with social, emotional, behavioural and anxiety issues and a wide range of abilities. The challenges in providing for large numbers of young people with such a diverse range of need are immense. The senior management team should provide reports on a regular basis to BELB to assure them that the centre has the capacity to continue to provide for the large number of young people with challenging behaviour and complex needs.
- A number of staff lead on areas of the curriculum related to their subject areas and expertise in an informal manner. The head of centre needs to clarify the role of those staff who provide curriculum leadership to ensure that key curriculum areas are co ordinated and developed more effectively with clear structures of accountability linked to the priorities in the centre's strategic plan for the learning needs of the young people.
- The constant placements of pupils throughout the year is an area of concern as this has an unsettling effect on both the planning and the other young people. The continual arrival of young people impacts directly on the centre dynamics, groupings, pupil progression and the quality of teaching and learning and inhibits strategic planning by the senior management of the centre. The senior management team should consider more effective strategies to manage the timing and suitability of the placement of young people and advise the centre management group accordingly.

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 areas for improvement which the centre has demonstrated the capacity to address. These are for:

- the head of centre to review and develop the roles of the senior management and curriculum leaders; and

- the BELB to meet with the senior management team on a regular basis to assure themselves that the centre has the capacity to continue to provide for the large number of young people with challenging behaviour and complex needs.

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

Accommodation

- The centre accommodation is not large enough to accommodate the number of young people enrolled.
- The current practice of timetabling three separate groups of young people and teachers to share one classroom is unsatisfactory.
- The use of the store in the technology and design department as a classroom is unsatisfactory and should be addressed as a matter of urgency. The systems room should be used by the technology and design dept as designed.

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