

Education and Training Inspectorate EOTAS INSPECTION



Loughshore EOTAS, County Antrim

Report of an inspection (Involving Action Short of Strike) in
December 2019



The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education
Department for the Economy
and other commissioning Departments



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1. Context

Loughshore Education Other Than At School (EOTAS) Centre is situated in the Shore Road area of North Belfast. The pupils travel to the centre from Belfast and the surrounding areas. At the time of the inspection the centre provided education for 63 pupils from Key Stage (KS) 3 and 4 with social emotional and behavioural difficulties. The Loughshore is part of the Education Authority (EA) EOTAS provision. An EA officer has overall management and governance responsibility for the centre. At the time of the inspection there were 34 staff, including an acting head of centre, a senior teacher and an acting senior teacher.

The trade unions which make up the Northern Ireland Teachers' Council have declared industrial action primarily in relation to a pay dispute and also workload and other management issues. The industrial action includes non-co-operation with the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI). Prior to the inspection, the centre informed the ETI that the teachers would not be co-operating with the inspection. The leadership co-operated with the inspection in relation to governance and safeguarding responsibilities. The ETI has a statutory duty to monitor, inspect and report on the quality of education and professional practice among teachers under Article 102 of the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986. Therefore, the inspection proceeded and the following evaluations are based on the evidence as made available at the time of the inspection.

2. Views of parents and staff

A very small number of parents, non-teaching staff, teaching staff and referring schools responded to the questionnaires. The responses were mostly positive with a very small number providing additional written comments which expressed support for the centre and the staff. The small number of issues concerning the use of Information and Communication Technology and the limited hours of attendance available was discussed with the EA officer with responsibility for governance.

3. Focus of the inspection

The inspection focused on:

- the outcomes for pupils; in particular, how the centre is addressing individual needs;
- the quality of provision in the organisation; and
- the quality of leadership and management.

The ETI was unable to evaluate fully:

- the outcomes for the pupils; in particular, how the centre is addressing individual needs;
- the quality of the provision including care, welfare and support of the pupils.
- the quality of leadership and management.

Where it has been possible to evaluate aspects, they are reported below.

4. Overall findings of the inspection

Overall effectiveness	Unable to assure the quality of education
Outcomes for learners	No performance level available
Quality of provision	No performance level available
Leadership and management	No performance level available

5. Outcomes for learners

- It was reported that almost one third of the pupils do not attend the centre for the minimum requirement of four and a half hours each day as set out in the EOTAS Guidance - Circular 2014/24.
- Key Stage 3 pupils do not have the opportunity to participate in a partnership programme by attending their referring schools for part of the school week. None of the year 11 and 12 pupils return to their mainstream school to study part-time.
- The inspectors met with a minority of pupils. Most were articulate, friendly and engaged well in the discussions. They stated that they are growing in confidence and enjoy their learning.
- It is a matter of concern that a small number of pupils reported to the inspectors that they had attended the centre for five years and had never attended a mainstream post-primary school.

The ETI was unable to evaluate fully:

- the learning outcomes for the pupils;
- progression in the pupils' learning; and
- the pupils' wider skills and dispositions.

6. Quality of provision

- A significant minority of the pupils do not receive the minimum requirements of the standard teaching day for an EOTAS setting of four and a half hours of tuition as set out in the EOTAS Guidance - Circular 2014/24.
- There are no links to the schools in which they are registered to enable them to study part-time and access the full curriculum entitlement.

- It is a matter of concern that a minority of pupils receive their education in locations in isolation from the centre, in public libraries and community centres, not designed for that purpose. As a consequence, the settings are not assured to the standards for access, security and health and safety required¹.
- It is reported that insufficient educational psychology support is available to assist staff in managing the increasingly complex needs and behaviours of the pupils.
- As stated in the previous inspection report², the accommodation is insufficient for the number of pupils on the register. Classrooms, for example, are used to teach three separate groups of pupils by different staff at the same time.

The ETI was unable to evaluate fully:

- the quality of the curriculum;
- the effectiveness of guidance and support in bringing about high quality individual learning experiences;
- the effectiveness and impact of planning, engagement, teaching/training and assessment in promoting successful learning; and
- the impact of care and welfare for pupils.

7. Leadership and management

- Based on the evidence available at the time of inspection, the ETI's evaluation is that there can be limited confidence in the aspects of governance evaluated, particularly in relation to the leadership of safeguarding.
- There are aspects of governance to review, namely to ensure that the academic and pastoral needs of all pupils are met fully by providing them with their full curriculum entitlement and facilitating their part-time return to their school to study.
- The EA should consider how to facilitate greater involvement of local referring schools, community representatives and parents in supporting the work of the centre with representation on a local governance group.

¹ EOTAS Guidance - Circular 2014/24

² [Alternative Education Provision Inspection – Loughshore Education Resource Centre, Belfast](#)

The ETI was unable to evaluate fully:

- the effectiveness and impact of the strategic and middle leadership.
- the effectiveness of action to promote and sustain improvement, including self-evaluation and the development planning process.

8. Safeguarding

- Based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the arrangements for safeguarding pupils are unsatisfactory.
- Risk assessments for educational visits and for pupils educated off site are not fit for purpose. Furthermore, there is no educational visits policy outlining the procedures and protocols for the completion of educational visit risk assessments.
- A range of significant policies lack appropriate detail, fail variously to comply with regulatory and legislative requirements and are not sufficient to guide consistency in practice. These include: the anti-bullying policy, the drugs education policy, the relationships and sexuality education policy; the policy for managing critical incidents; the educational visits policy, the attendance policy, the online safety policy and the positive behaviour management policy.
- The EA officer with governance responsibility has not received the required designated governor training. Furthermore, there has been no annual child protection update by the centre to the governor over the last 15 months.

There is an urgent need:

- to ensure the risk assessments for educational visits are more robust by identifying clearly how those risks are managed by individual staff and informed by an education visits policy;
- to improve the risk assessments for those vulnerable pupils who receive their education off-site and to review this model of provision;
- to review and revise all outdated care and welfare policies to ensure they comply with contemporary DE circulars and legislation;
- for the designated governor for child protection to undertake all required training; and
- to review the decision to remove fire extinguishers from the main corridors.

The pupils report that they feel safe in the centre, although they were unaware of aspects of the positive behaviour policy. They are aware what to do if they have any concerns about their safety or welfare.

However, owing to the action short of strike, the ETI was unable to evaluate fully the outworking of the arrangements for safeguarding.

9. Overall effectiveness

Owing to the impact of the action short of strike being taken by the staff, the ETI is unable to assure parents/carers, the wider community and stakeholders of the quality of education and safeguarding being provided for the pupils.

The centre is a high priority for future inspection with no further notice.

The ETI will return to the centre within six weeks to evaluate and report on the arrangements for safeguarding.

Health and safety

1. All of the fire extinguishers within the main exit points of the building have been removed.

Statistical data

Statistical information was not provided by the centre due to industrial action.

Inspection methodology and evidence base

The ETI's [Inspection and Self-Evaluation Framework](#) which guides inspection and self-evaluation within EOTAS settings is available on the ETI website.

Inspectors scrutinised available documentation and held formal discussions with young people in groups, and the EA officer with management responsibility for the centre and a member of staff with specific responsibilities.

The arrangements for this inspection included a meeting with a representative from the governors and the opportunity for all parents, teaching and support staff to complete a confidential questionnaire.

Quantitative terms used by the Education and Training Inspectorate

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 ETI use the following performance levels when reporting on outcomes for learners, quality of provision and leadership and management³:

Outstanding
Very good
Good
Important area(s) for improvement
Requires significant improvement
Requires urgent improvement

Overall effectiveness

The ETI use one of the following inspection outcomes when evaluating the overall effectiveness of the centre:

The centre has a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor how the centre sustains improvement.

The centre demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor how the centre sustains improvement.

The centre needs to address (an) important area(s) for improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor and report on the centre's progress in addressing the area(s) for improvement. There will be a formal follow-up inspection.

The centre needs to address urgently the significant areas for improvement identified in the interest of all the learners. It requires external support to do so. The ETI will monitor and report on the centre's progress in addressing the areas for improvement. There will be a formal follow-up inspection.

³ And the overall provision in a subject area or unit, as applicable.

ADDENDUM TO THE REPORT ON THE INSPECTION OF LOUGHSHORE EDUCATION OTHER THAN AT SCHOOL (EOTAS) CENTRE IN DECEMBER 2019

SAFEGUARDING

In line with the child protection procedures of the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI), the ETI returned to Loughshore EOTAS Centre on 4 February 2020 as a follow-up to the inspection which took place on the 12 December 2019; the purpose of the visit was to ensure that the safeguarding issues, evaluated as unsatisfactory in the inspection, had been addressed.

During the interim period, the centre received support from the Education Authority and the following improvements have taken place:

- eight policies have been reviewed and updated;
- the EA officer with responsibility for governance has completed safeguarding training;
- the fire extinguishers are now located at the exit points of the building; and
- the risk assessments for educational visits and for pupils educated off site have been revised.

On the basis of the evidence available, the revised arrangements for safeguarding now reflect broadly the guidance issued by the Department of Education (DE).

There is a need to:

- further mitigate the risks that may occur in using public venues and assure that the standards for access, security and health and safety required⁴ are met; and
- develop further the educational visits and positive behaviour management policies.

Owing to the ongoing action short of strike, the ETI was unable to evaluate fully, the outworking of the arrangements for safeguarding in the centre.

⁴ EOTAS Guidance - Circular 2014/24

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