

EDUCATION OTHER THAN AT SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Newstart Education Centre,
Belfast

Report of an Inspection in
April 2015

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 the young people, and staff with specific responsibilities.

The arrangements for this inspection included:

- a meeting with representatives from Newstart board of directors;
- meetings with groups of parents;
- discussions with 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	10	9	90	7
Teachers	*	*	100	*
Support Staff	7	7	100	5

* fewer than 5

All of the parental questionnaire responses were positive. The parents stated their strong support for the work of the staff and management and the caring and supportive ethos throughout the centre. There were no areas of concern raised and additional comments were very supportive and positive of the staff and the centre. The teacher and support staff questionnaire responses were all positive, and indicate strong support for management and the staff team.

2. Context

Newstart Education Centre (NEC) is a community based organisation, located in West Belfast, providing Education Other Than At School (EOTAS) provision for up to 13 key stage 4 young people, with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. The project receives funding from the Education Authority and contributes to the provision within the Belfast area for young people disengaged from mainstream education and at risk of social and educational marginalisation. Most of the young people join the centre with attainment which is below that typical of their age because they have experienced disrupted schooling, non attendance or social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Newstart Education Centre	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Enrolment	18	19	16	12
Outreach support only	-	-	-	*
Attendance %	-	77%	76%	84%
FSME Percentage ¹	77%	84%	75%	100%

Source: data as held by the centre.

* indicates a number 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 outcomes;
- the quality of provision; and
- the quality of leadership and management.

4. Overall findings

Overall performance level	Outstanding
Achievements and outcomes	Outstanding
Provision	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Outstanding

Key findings of the inspection

5. Achievements and outcomes

- Almost all of the young people respond positively to the culture of learning and high expectations promoted by all staff; consequently, the young people develop the confidence to re-engage in education and improve their life chances and prepare better for life after school. They are respectful towards staff and their peers, develop positive dispositions and aspire to achieve.
- The evidence indicates that almost all of the young people are engaging more effectively with education and have significantly increased their level of attendance. In the month prior to the inspection seven of the twelve young people had attendance of 80% or more including four young people who had 100% attendance.
- In 2014 five of the young people achieved grades C to D in GCSE English language and mathematics with seven young people achieving grades B to D in GCSE Information Communication Technology (ICT). The NEC data indicates that all of the young people achieve at least one literacy qualification by the time they leave the centre. In 2014 all of the young people gained Essential Skills numeracy qualifications accredited by the Council for Curriculum Examinations and Assessment (CCEA).
- As part of their personal development programme most of the young people study successfully a range of short course Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA) unit awards in substance misuse, domestic violence, alcohol awareness, food safety, stress management, first aid, health and safety, and suicide awareness. The courses studied have enabled the young people to better understand issues that are pertinent to their lives and become more confident learners.

- The centre maintains careful records of the destinations of the young people who leave each year; the data indicates that almost all of them transition to training organisations or further education placements with a small number studying for GCE A level qualifications. The young people are supported in their transition by the “Moving Forward Moving On” project team and their personal key workers in NEC who continue to support, track and monitor the young people when they leave the centre.

6. Provision

- The quality of learning and teaching ranged from good to very good and in the majority of lessons was very good. The young people benefit from well planned lessons that are enjoyable with practical and interesting activities that motivate and challenge them. The staff provide skilled, dynamic and enthusiastic teaching, based on a sound knowledge of their subject, which engages effectively the young people in learning; there is a good pace to the lessons with effective use of ICT to support the learning. The work is highly differentiated and staff provide positive feedback with clear direction to individual young people on how their work can be improved further, along with robust self-evaluation of their own teaching.
- Each young person has an assigned NEC key worker who meets with them on a regular basis to set targets, monitor progress, and assist the young person to overcome any barriers to learning. The NEC key worker and youth worker work effectively with the centre management to ensure that the young people and their families are well supported to deal with issues within and outside the centre.
- The staff have high expectations of the young people and there is a clear focus on academic achievement with effective individual learning plans designed around the needs of each young person. There is highly effective individualised teaching for those young people who require additional support with their core subjects to ensure that they become secure in their learning.
- The very good ICT facilities are used effectively by the young people to research and produce good quality coursework. All teaching staff are highly skilled in using the interactive white boards to enhance learning.
- The centre's programmes for literacy and numeracy are of high quality and meet the needs of the young people. The whole school programme for numeracy is comprehensive, provides broad and balanced coverage across the areas of mathematics, and outlines clear progression in the mathematical concepts. The centre's programme for literacy outlines progression in the key skills required for the young people to attain external accreditation. The co-ordinators planning and detailed evaluations are a major strength of the provision ensuring that the teachers reflect on their practice and develop clear strategies to support every young person.
- The provision for pastoral care is outstanding. The NEC has an inclusive and caring ethos with sensitive and effective support provided by the staff for the young people, and for parents experiencing particular periods of stress. A key feature of the provision is the holistic support for the young people and their families provided by the full time social worker and staff. The young people benefit greatly from the very good opportunities to develop their personal and social skills through the highly skilled teaching leading to positive educational attainments, and the comprehensive family support.

- The parents benefit from the opportunities to attend courses in NEC, for example, positive parenting and emotional health and well-being, and as a consequence they develop good working relationships with the staff. In discussions, the parents expressed their appreciation of the family support provided by the NEC social worker and staff team, and the opportunities provided to meet other parents and re-engage with education through the accredited courses provided for them each week.
- The young people are supported well by the staff and by the Department for Employment and Learning careers service to identify and focus on the qualities, skills and qualifications they need for employment. They are guided effectively to make choices of attainable career paths. The NEC provides a wide range of opportunities for the young people to attend open days in training organisations and visit further education providers, and job fairs in the local area, and for owners of local businesses to visit the centre and talk to them about securing employment. The young people in their final year have the opportunity to participate in work experience.
- In discussions with the young people, they stated that they are happy in the NEC, have very good working relationships with the staff. The NEC has good links with a range of support agencies who contribute effectively to the young people's holistic development.

7. Leadership and management

- The NEC management enjoy the confidence and respect of the young people and their families, staff and the local community. They provide a clear and strategic direction and vision for the centre based on a comprehensive knowledge of the young people.
- The management has developed an appropriate strategic plan and are observing and sharing effective practice amongst all staff. There is a strong culture of self-evaluation, underpinned by the effective use of data and assessments and the views of the young people. All of the staff are reflective practitioners and are committed to continuous improvement in the interests of the young people.
- The management at all levels has successfully promoted a culture of high expectations of the young people. The positive values and attitudes are built through strong relationships with the young people and a detailed understanding of their individual needs.
- The special educational needs co-ordinator has developed an effective baseline assessment to identify, on admission, the young people's strengths and any omissions in their learning, and to develop individual learning plans with additional support when required.
- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the organisation has comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding young people. These arrangements broadly reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education. The young people feel safe in the centre and know who they can speak to if they have any concerns about their well-being.

- Based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the parents, staff and community can have confidence in the aspects of governance evaluated. The directors visit the centre on a regular basis and are well informed on matters relating to the progress of the young people.

8. Conclusion

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this centre is outstanding. The Newstart Education Centre is meeting effectively the educational and pastoral needs of the young people; and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

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