Education and Training Inspectorate
EOTAS INSPECTION

Loughan EOTAS, County Antrim

Report of an inspection (Involving Action Short of Strike) in January 2020

The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

Providing inspection services for:
Department of Education
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CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE CSE

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1. Context

Loughan Education Other Than At School (EOTAS) Centre is located on the outskirts of Ballymena. The pupils travel to the centre from Ballymena and surrounding areas. The centre provides education for 20 pupils from Key Stage (KS) 4 with social emotional and behavioural difficulties. The centre 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 the centre had six staff, including an acting head of centre, one permanent full-time teacher, a permanent behaviour support assistant and four temporary part-time teachers.

The trade unions which make up the Northern Ireland Teachers' Council (NITC) have declared industrial action primarily in relation to a pay dispute and also workload and other management issues. The industrial action include 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, leadership 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 raised by the referring schools highlighted their lack of knowledge of therapeutic support, child protection policies within the centre and the lack of opportunities for their pupils to return to school to study part-time. The issues raised were 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 for the 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 is a matter of concern that during the past two years a small number of pupils attend the centre for reduced hours and there is no plan to engage them full-time to the centre. The centre's data indicates that most pupils have improved their attendance since coming to the centre, however attendance, at 61.6%, remains an area for significant improvement.

- Only a small number of pupils return to their mainstream school to study part-time.

- The inspectors met with a small number of pupils. Most pupils in the group participated in the discussion and highlighted their appreciation of the centre staff. They also appreciated the small teaching groups, which result in fewer distractions from learning and the higher levels of teacher support. Despite this approach, further support is required to develop more effectively the self-confidence of all the pupils.

- In the last two years all of the pupils achieved a qualification in English and mathematics, with almost half achieving a level two qualification. One quarter of the cohort achieved five GCSE equivalent qualifications during the same period.

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

- The centre does not provide the minimum requirements of a standard teaching day in an EOTAS setting. A standard teaching day should comprise four and a half hours of tuition in two sessions, separated by a period of not less than half an hour, for all pupils, as set out in the Department of Education (DE) EOTAS guidance 2014/24.

- The provision of one hour and forty-five minutes per week for English and mathematics; this is insufficient to cover appropriately these curriculum areas. To provide opportunities for reinforcement and progression the pupils should have the opportunity to study those subjects every day and access their full curriculum entitlement.

- At the time of the inspection a small number of pupils were attending their mainstream school to study part-time. It is a matter of concern that more of the referring schools do not provide opportunities for their pupils to return to their school part-time to study and access their full curriculum entitlement.

- There is a lack of therapeutic support and interventions to meet effectively the complex needs of the pupils. In addition the lack of dedicated Educational Psychology support is impeding staff in developing suitable strategies to manage the increasingly complex needs and behaviours of the pupils.

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

- It is reported that the uncertainty regarding the temporary leadership and teaching posts in the centre makes the retention of experienced staff difficult and impacts negatively on the specialist expertise, curriculum and strategic development of the centre.

- 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. There are aspects of governance to review, namely, the need to resolve the lack of a full-time permanent staff team. which is having a negative impact on the curriculum and outcomes for pupils.

- 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.

The ETI was unable to evaluate:

- 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 reflect broadly the DE guidance. It is important that the centre develops policies for online safety and educational visits.

The pupils report that they feel safe in the centre and 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.

APPENDIX A

Health and safety

The centre is situated in a relatively isolated location set back from the roadway. The centre does not have a security surveillance system to monitor the entrance and exits of the building. Therefore the centre does not reflect the same access and security as a school building as set out in Department of Education EOTAS guidance 6.1 2014/24.

APPENDIX B

Statistical data

Loughan EOTAS	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Enrolment	8	14	15	20
% Attendance	N/A	N/A	59.6	61.6
% FSME[1]	25	50	66.6	65

Source: data as held by the organisation.
N/A not available

[1] The term 'FSME Percentage' refers to the percentage of young people entitled to free centre meals.

APPENDIX C

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.

https://www.etini.gov.uk/sites/etini.gov.uk/files/publications/isef-eotas.pdf

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 representatives from the governors and the opportunity for all parents, teaching and support staff to complete a confidential questionnaire.

APPENDIX D

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 management[2]:

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.

[2] And the overall provision in a subject area or unit, as applicable.

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