

YOUTH INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Ballykeel Youth Centre,
Ballymena, County Antrim

Report of a Follow-up Inspection
in February 2019



The Education and Training Inspectorate
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FOLLOW-UP TO THE INSPECTION OF BALLYKEEL YOUTH CENTRE

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) carried out an inspection of Ballykeel youth centre in October 2017¹, which concluded that the centre needs to address important areas for improvement identified in the interest of all of the learners. The following areas needed to be addressed:

- the young people to participate more effectively in the life of the centre and for them to progress into leadership roles and responsibilities;
- the staff to develop effective planning and evaluation of their programmes and demonstrate a clearer understanding of the learning outcomes for the young people; and
- the leadership and management to review and revise the controlled delivery agreement (CDA) as a framework for the further development of the centre, including a more strategic approach to the recruitment and training of staff and volunteers.

The ETI carried out an interim follow-up visit in May 2018, met with staff and representatives of the Education Authority (EA) and conducted a follow-up inspection in February 2019. The ETI were presented with an appropriate action plan following the inspection and an updated action plan at the follow-up inspection in February 2019.

In the interval since the original inspection, the following actions and changes which affect the work of the centre have taken place:

- the EA has redefined the geographical boundaries of the youth service across Northern Ireland; Ballykeel youth centre now lies in the Mid/East Antrim and Antrim and Newtownabbey division;
- the centre closed for refurbishment in February 2018 and operated from alternative accommodation, including a mobile youth unit and a local community centre, until January 2019;
- four youth support workers resigned in September 2018, leaving a complement of one full-time centre-based worker, four youth support workers, one volunteer and three senior members who have leadership responsibilities;
- Ballee youth centre closed and amalgamated with Ballykeel youth centre in March 2018;
- there has been additional support at a strategic level provided for the youth workers and the centre by EA staff members;
- a new target monitor has been implemented by the EA to assist with the monitoring and evaluation of the centre; and
- links have been established with schools and community partners in the area.

¹ <https://www.etini.gov.uk/publications/youth-inspection-ballykeel-youth-centre-ballymena-county-antrim>

Key findings

- There has been good progress in increasing the participation of young people, in the life and work of the centre, through their involvement in a range of appropriate accredited and non-accredited programmes, including the T:BUC² camp, the essential skills level 2 programme and the leadership programme for young adults. The small number of young volunteers reported that they receive good support and encouragement from the youth workers to develop their leadership skills.
- The youth workers are more aware of their roles and responsibilities and have a clearer understanding of the learning outcomes for young people as a result of recent training, team meetings and through individual support and supervision. The recent training for youth support workers on dealing with challenging behaviour has impacted positively on the behaviour of the young people. There has been good development of the programme planning, for example, specific times for junior, intermediate and senior members, which has increased attendance. While the quality of reflection on the youth work practice in the nightly debrief sessions is improving, more attention needs to be given to the collation and analysis of data from the sessions to inform more effectively future actions to promote further improvement.
- There remains the need for the staff team to evidence improvement based on the actions taken as a result of effective self-evaluation.
- The CDA contains key areas for action that have been agreed appropriately through a consultation process with the young people and the youth work team. There is a need, however, to review the action plans to ensure that the outcomes for the young people and the key targets are achievable given the current staff complement. Going forward it is important that the CDA is fit for purpose, manageable and that it includes a strategic plan for the recruitment and retention of new staff and volunteers.

Overall Effectiveness

Ballykeel youth centre needs to address important areas for improvement in the interests of all of the learners. There remains the need to:

- demonstrate evidence of improvement based on actions taken as a result of robust self-evaluation;
- include a strategic plan for the recruitment and retention of youth support workers and volunteers; and
- review the outcomes and targets in the current CDA to ensure they are realistic and achievable given the current staff complement.

The ETI will conduct a further follow-up inspection in 12 to 18 months.

² Together: Building an United Community

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