

Loughan EOTAS, Ballymena, County Antrim

Report of a Follow-up Inspection (Involving Action Short of Strike) in April 2023



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Follow-up Inspection visit to Loughan Education Other Than At School (EOTAS) Centre, Ballymena, County Antrim, BT43 6LX

Introduction

An inspection of Loughan EOTAS centre was carried out in [2020](#). While this inspection was impacted by action short of strike, areas for improvement were identified, as detailed in the report. A follow-up inspection took place in April 2023. Prior to the inspection, the centre informed the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) that the centre staff would co-operate with the inspection in relation to elements of the centre's arrangements for safeguarding pupils only. Inspectors met with staff, and pupils, and observed a session led by the youth worker.

The ETI has a [statutory duty](#) to monitor, inspect and report on the quality of education being provided for pupils and young people. The inspection proceeded on a partial basis, as outlined above, and the key findings are based on evidence made available at the time of the inspection visit. Inspectors were unable to evaluate fully the safeguarding arrangements, and teachers did not facilitate observation of lessons by the inspectors.

Key actions and changes

The centre has received support from the Education Authority (EA) in relation to the:

- appointment of a permanent centre leader, specialist teachers in English and mathematics, and a temporary part-time youth worker;
- improvement in the accommodation and information and communication technology (ICT) resources to include security surveillance to monitor the entrance and exits of the building, the redevelopment of the outside space for sporting activities and outdoor learning, the removal of mobile classrooms; and suitable transport arrangements for learning opportunities beyond the centre;
- development of the therapeutic curriculum to include a nurture breakfast, personal development, mentoring, access to counselling, physical education, horticulture and preventative education; and
- provision of a wide range of staff professional learning, including nurture training, restorative and trauma-informed practice, assessment and target-setting practices, literacy, safeguarding and ICT.

Views of parents/carers, support staff and referral schools

A small number of the referral schools, parents/carers and support staff responded to the questionnaires. The responses indicated their appreciation of the work of the centre and the support given to the young people. The ETI intends to re-issue the questionnaires at the time of the next inspection visit to complete this follow-up inspection.

Key findings in relation to Safeguarding

The following findings are based on the evidence available at the time of the follow-up inspection.

- The centre has reviewed its safeguarding policies to include elements relating to online safety and the arrangements for educational visits.
- The pupils reported that they enjoy their learning and appreciate how their successes are celebrated. They highlighted the support provided by the staff and the quality of feedback to help them improve. They reflected on how the developments in the learning environment enrich their learning, including the fitness gym, beauty room, nurture space, ICT resources and high-quality recreational area. The pupils value the opportunities to develop skills in horticulture, teamwork, problem solving and social responsibility, and to participate in a range of outdoor learning programmes to support their health, well-being and ability to keep safe.
- The pupils discussed their appropriate career pathways to realise their future aspirations and how their individual learning programmes are tailored to help them develop relevant knowledge, understanding and skills.
- In the session observed, the pupils engaged positively, collaborated well and used a range of resources to progress their learning.
- Due to the partial nature of the evidence base, the ETI is unable to evaluate the arrangements for safeguarding pupils. The pupils report that they feel safe in the centre and know what to do if they have any concerns about their safety or well-being. They spoke about how they are treated fairly, are listened to respectfully, and how their views are used to inform decision making in relation to the curriculum and the use of resources.

Conclusion

Due to the action short of strike by the teaching unions, the ETI was unable to evaluate the efficacy of the centre's arrangements for safeguarding young people and the centre's progress in effecting the required improvements in the quality of its provision since the original inspection in 2020.

The district inspector will continue to monitor the centre's progress and the inspection will be completed at the request of the centre, up to and including June 2023. Subsequently, the inspection will be completed without further notice.

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