

Newtownabbey EOTAS, Newtownabbey, County Antrim

Report of a Follow-up Inspection in February 2023



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Third Follow-up Inspection to Newtownabbey Education Other Than At School (EOTAS) Centre, County Antrim, BT37 0LX

Introduction

The original inspection of Newtownabbey EOTAS centre was carried out in May 2016 when the educational provision was evaluated as having important areas for improvement.

Two follow-up inspections took place in October 2017 and March 2020, both of which were impacted by the industrial action short of strike by teaching unions. The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) inspectors carried out a monitoring visit in June 2021.

Owing to the action short of strike, ETI was unable to evaluate the extent to which the important areas for improvement left at the original inspection had been addressed, namely to:

- develop further the planning, monitoring and evaluation of the learning and teaching in the centre, outreach and tuition service;
- develop further the curriculum to include a therapeutic input and greater focus on enabling the young people to manage their behaviour, build their self-esteem and resilience to help them maintain their place in school; and
- review the safeguarding policy to ensure that procedures are clear and that the code of conduct for staff includes the use of social media.

Consequently, Newtownabbey EOTAS centre remained in the follow-up process.

A third follow-up inspection was carried out in February 2023 which was also impacted by action short of strike. Prior to the inspection, the centre informed ETI that some of the staff would co-operate with the inspection in relation to safeguarding, and that representatives from the Education Authority (EA) would provide information relating to governance, the workings of the partnership programme and the outreach support provided by the centre staff to the schools in the locality. Observations of teaching and learning by teaching staff were not permitted. ETI has a [statutory duty](#) to monitor, inspect and report on the quality of education being provided for children and young people. The follow-up inspection proceeded on a partial basis and the key findings are based on the evidence made available at the time of the inspection visit.

Key actions and changes

In the interval since the original inspection, changes in the centre's context include the:

- re-organisation of the exceptional teaching arrangements within the EA's Children and Young People's Services which are no longer managed by the centre;
- development of the key stage 3 partnership programme with schools and outreach support to pupils who have social, behavioural, emotional and wellbeing needs, including whole-school training, targeted advisory support and time-bound targeted intervention for individual pupils; and
- refurbishment of the accommodation to provide a therapy room and a kitchen in the nurture base, and increased provision for information and communication technology (ICT).

The centre received external support provided by the EA in relation to the:

- review of staffing, including the appointment of a new permanent centre leader for the partnership programme and outreach support;
- review of the process for schools to access outreach support and referrals to the partnership programme; 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, ICT and therapeutic interventions.

Views of pupils, parents/carers and staff

A small number of parents/carers, teaching and support staff, and referral schools responded to the confidential online questionnaires. Their positive responses highlighted how well the pupils are supported in the centre, the quality of respectful working relationships and the centre's proactive communication. The ETI intends to re-issue the questionnaires at the time of the next inspection visit to complete this follow-up inspection.

Key findings

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

- The centre's safeguarding policy sets out clear procedures, including guidance for the appropriate use of social media in the code of conduct for staff.

- In discussion with the inspectors, 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. When interacting with others, they listen carefully and talk respectfully, using their own strategies for self-regulation. In reflecting well on their progress in relation to their individual targets for learning, they respond enthusiastically to their success being celebrated. They have clear aspirations for their career pathways and know the qualifications they need. They appreciate the partnership programme which enables them to attend their school on at least two days per week and for specialist sessions in the centre on other days.
- The enhanced therapeutic curriculum provision includes a mentoring programme, nurture breakfast and lunch, plant and animal care, home economics, circle time and well-being lessons.
- All pupils reintegrate to mainstream schooling, which reflects well on their ability to manage their behaviours, and the impact of the therapeutic strategies on their personal, social and emotional development.
- The centre evaluates, in collaboration with the referring schools, the pupils' progress and adapts the partnership programme to enable the pupils to re-integrate to their school as quickly as possible.

Conclusion

Due to the action short of strike by the teaching unions, there was insufficient evidence for ETI to evaluate the efficacy of the centre's arrangements for safeguarding children. In addition, ETI was unable to evaluate the centre's progress in effecting the required improvements in the quality of its provision since the original inspection in 2016. The centre's third follow-up inspection is incomplete.

The district inspector will continue to monitor the centre's progress and the follow-up 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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