

EDUCATION AND TRAINING INSPECTORATE

EOTAS INSPECTION

Sunlea EOTAS Centre, Coleraine,
County Londonderry

Report of a Follow-up Inspection in October 2022



Providing Inspection services for:
Department of Education
Department for the Economy
and other commissioning Departments



Follow-up to the inspection of Sunlea Education Other Than At School (EOTAS) Centre, Coleraine

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) conducted an inspection of Sunlea Educational and Guidance Centre in February 2015 and a follow-up inspection in October 2016 when significant areas for improvement were identified, namely to:

- focus more clearly on the re-integration of young people into their referring schools within a shorter timescale for those who have the capacity to do so, and develop a longer-term provision for the small number of young people who cannot return to their referring school;
- continue to develop the therapeutic approach to address the social, emotional and behavioural needs of the young people in order that they develop further skills to enable them to successfully return to their referring schools; and
- review the policies and procedures for the tuition service and provide the tutors and teachers with the appropriate resources, including Information and Communication Technology (ICT) equipment, to meet the needs of the young people.

The centre's actions plans were adjusted in light of the feedback given by the ETI. A second follow-up inspection was carried out in November 2017. Owing to action short of strike by the teaching unions at that time, the ETI was unable to evaluate fully the impact of actions taken and the extent to which the areas for improvement had been addressed. The ETI carried out a monitoring visit in April 2022 and a third follow-up inspection in October 2022.

In the interval since the initial inspection, the centre has received support¹ provided by the Education Authority (EA) in relation to the appointment of a new centre leader and the recruitment of staff to ensure an appropriate staffing complement is in place. Currently, there are four full-time permanent teaching staff, one behaviour support assistant (BSA) and access to additional BSAs for outreach support as required. Support has also been provided on staff professional learning in relation to safeguarding, Information and Communication Technology (ICT), tracking assessments, and therapeutic interventions, and with leadership and management of the centre through regular meetings between the centre leader and the locality Adviser to track progress in relation to the centre's action plan and to address issues.

Over the same period, the key actions or changes which affect the work of the centre include:

- reorganisation of the tuition service within the Education Authority (EA) which is no longer managed by the centre;

¹ In EOTAS centres, the staff are employed directly by the EA and managed by the EA Post-Primary Behaviour Support and Provisions of the Children and Young People's Services Directorate.

- involvement of the EOTAS centre in an EA-led Key Stage (KS) 3 Partnership Programme², providing additional outreach support to pupils who have social, behavioural and emotional wellbeing needs, including whole-school training, targeted advisory support and time-bound targeted intervention for individual pupils;
- investment in digital technology including five desktops, laptop provision for all staff and interactive whiteboards in the classrooms; and
- a programme of minor works to improve the internal accommodation and to address health and safety issues.

As a consequence of the support and the key changes and actions taken within the centre, there have been improvements in the quality of education as reported in the key findings section of this report.

Views of staff, parents/carers and pupils

Most of the staff responded to the questionnaire. Overall, their positive feedback highlighted their enjoyment in working in the centre and their focused drive for improvement in pupils' outcomes. A small number of parents/carers responded to the questionnaire indicating their appreciation of the support by the staff in helping their children to overcome barriers to their learning. Any issues raised in the parent/carer and staff questionnaires were discussed with the centre leader and EA managers.

In discussion with inspectors, the pupils report they feel safe and happy in the centre. They appreciate being able to talk to staff readily about their concerns and they spoke about their enjoyment of learning and their aspirations for the future. They value the intensive ongoing review of their learning between the centre and their school.

Key findings

The centre is now meeting effectively the needs of the pupils and is supporting them well towards successful re-integration to their mainstream school. The centre can demonstrate the positive impact of intervention and support strategies in improving outcomes for pupils from their baseline position through their regular assessments and monitoring of the pupils' work by the teachers. In the lessons observed, the pupils provided extended responses in discussion and had the self-confidence to ask questions to further their learning. Their self-awareness enabled them to apply strategies that helped them regulate their own behaviours.

² Pupils attend the centre weekly on a part-time basis, with the remainder of the week spent in their referring school.

The quality of provision has improved, and all of the lessons observed were effective in promoting successful learning. The teachers plan well to develop the pupils' skills in literacy, using mathematics and personal and social development through relevant contexts. The staff: foster positive working relationships with the pupils; use questioning, a range of active learning strategies, resources and ICT effectively to differentiate the learning to meet the pupils' needs and interests; and consolidate the pupils' learning through plenaries.

The curriculum has been reviewed well to meet better the needs of the pupils. The pupils now benefit from a quality therapeutic curriculum which includes timetabled circle time, nurture breakfast, equine therapy, a reward system linked to weekly targets, horticulture, programmes in personal and social skills, a Police Service of Northern Ireland educational programme and access to counselling. In addition, the pupils access targeted support from an educational psychologist in Cognitive Behaviour Therapy, helping them to regulate their emotions and develop critical thinking to better inform their decision making and improve their readiness to learn. The pupils engage well in the recently developed horticulture programme which enables them to apply their knowledge, understanding and skills in a practical context linked well to healthy lifestyles.

The leadership and management of the centre, and action to promote improvement, is now effective. The ongoing liaison between the centre and referring schools to tailor programmes to the pupils' complex needs is enabling pupils to return to their referring school as soon as is appropriate. Pupils' progress in relation to their personal learning plan targets is tracked well using digital technology between the centre and schools. The appointment of specialist teachers and ongoing staff professional learning, including access to educational psychology services, is improving the pupils' outcomes. In order to enhance further the alignment between the centre's provision and mainstream schools, the EA needs to increase the access for staff to professional learning from the EA School Development Service (SDS) and to enhance the pupils' access to effective youth provision. Furthermore, the centre has identified appropriately the difficulties in accessing support from the Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) and Social Services as having an adverse impact on pupils' wellbeing. For a small number of pupils with highly complex needs, a wider EOTAS programme at KS3 is required with greater involvement from the relevant medical professionals.

Currently, the EA management provides the governance scrutiny and challenge function. Based on the evidence presented at the time of inspection, the ETI's evaluation is that the centre requires independent governance, particularly in bringing impartiality to the oversight of the safeguarding arrangements.

Overall effectiveness

Sunlea EOTAS centre now 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 in:

- self-evaluating the pupils' learning and skills development through observations of teaching;

and how the EA:

- enables pupils' access to effective youth provision;
- provides staff with access to professional learning provided by the SDS;
- ensures independent governance of the centre;
- escalates priority with CAMHS and Social Services for pupils requiring urgent support; and
- develops further the wider KS3 EOTAS programme for pupils with highly complex needs.

APPENDIX A: Accommodation

The accommodation in the main building has limitations; it is not designed as a centre for the education of pupils with complex social, behavioural and emotional wellbeing needs.

© CROWN COPYRIGHT 2022

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part, except for commercial purposes or in connection with a prospectus or advertisement, provided that the source and date thereof are stated.

Copies of this report are available on the [ETI website](#)

Follow us on  [@ETI_news](#)  [@ETInews](#)  InsPIRE