

EDUCATION OTHER THAN AT SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Conway Mill Education Centre,
Belfast

Report of an Inspection in
November 2013



Providing Inspection Services for

Department of Education
Department for Employment and Learning
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure



Quantitative terms

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 Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) use the following performance levels in reports:

DESCRIPTOR
Outstanding
Very Good
Good
Satisfactory
Inadequate
Unsatisfactory

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1. Inspection method and evidence base

Inspectors observed teaching and learning, scrutinised documentation and the young peoples' written work and held formal and informal discussions with the young people, teachers and staff with specific responsibilities.

The arrangements for this inspection included:

- a meeting with representatives from the management committee;
- meetings with groups of young people; and
- the opportunity for the parents, teaching and support staff to complete a confidential questionnaire.

Questionnaire	Number issued	Number returned	Percentage returned	Number with comments
Parents	6	*	*	*
Teachers	*	*	*	*
Support Staff	*	*	*	*

* fewer than 5

All of the parental questionnaire responses are positive. The parents value the progress made by the young people and the caring and supportive ethos throughout the centre. There were no areas of concern and additional comments were very supportive and positive of the staff and the centre.

The teacher and support staff questionnaire responses were very positive, and indicate strong support for the day school co-ordinator and work of the centre. The Education and Training Inspectorate reported to the day school co-ordinator and management committee, the small number of areas of concern emerging from the questionnaire and, where appropriate, these have been commented on within the report.

2. Context

Conway Mill Education Centre is located in the lower Falls Road in West Belfast and serves a wide catchment area including two of the most deprived wards in Belfast. The centre is a community resource that provides alternative education in the form of a day school for up to ten key stage 4 young people, with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. The centre provides a range of educational facilities for young people and adults from the local community. The day school receives funding from the Belfast Education and Library Board (BELB) and is part of the overall range of provision within the BELB for young people disengaged from mainstream education and at risk of social and educational marginalisation.

Conway Mill Education Centre	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Enrolment	14	13	6	7
FSME Percentage ¹	76%	71%	100%	86%
No. of newcomers	0	0	0	0

Source: data as held by the school.

¹ The term 'FSME Percentage' refers to the percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals.

3. Focus of inspection

The inspection focused on:

- the young peoples' achievements and standards,
- the quality of provision in the centre; and
- the quality of leadership and management.

4. Overall finding

Overall Performance Level	Good
Achievements and Standards	Good
Provision	Good
Leadership and Management	Good

Key findings of the inspection

5. Achievements and standards

- All of the young people have histories of disrupted schooling, non attendance or social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. The centre provides a small group setting with good individual support and a curriculum designed around the needs of the young people.
- Most of the young people respond well to the positive learning environment receive high levels of support and can work independently or with others for most of the time. The evidence indicates that most of the young people develop their social and emotional skills and as a result have positive attitudes to learning.
- The centre's data shows that almost all of the young people achieve accreditation in a range of appropriate subjects that enables them to transfer to courses of their choice in further education or training organisations upon leaving the centre.
- The young people achieve very good levels of competence in using information and communication technology (ICT) and almost all achieve the European Computer Driving Licence accreditation at an appropriate level commensurate with their ability.

6. Provision

- There is mutual respect and tolerance between the young people and all adults in the centre. All of the staff affirm the young people appropriately and provide effective individual support that ensures they are able to engage well with learning.

- The quality of teaching is good or better in the majority of lessons observed; the young people are provided with a core curriculum which reflects very well their interests and social and emotional needs. The centre management need to consider, in discussion with the BELB and referring schools, how best to ensure that every young person has the opportunity to participate in practical vocational education courses to enhance their career pathways.
- The young people use information and communication technology well for research and producing good quality coursework. The lack of the C2k facility in the centre prevents them from accessing the range of educational programmes available to their peers in mainstream schools. (Appendix1.)
- The young people appreciate the visits by staff from their schools and, in the best practice, a senior teacher from the referring school visits their young person each term to monitor their pastoral care and review their academic progress.
- The quality of pastoral care in the centre is very good. The staff recognise and prioritise the importance of maintaining a conducive learning environment. The young people talk enthusiastically about the high level of care and individual support they receive from their tutors and the centre staff. In particular, they enjoy the practical learning activities and the regular opportunities to participate in outdoor pursuits and other educational visits.

7. Leadership and management

- The centre co-ordinator provides good leadership for staff and young people. She knows the young people well and takes a keen interest in their individual needs and education. All of the staff demonstrate a strong commitment to the welfare and well-being of the young people.
- The quality of planning to address the holistic needs of the young people is inconsistent. The centre co-ordinator needs to put in place a rigorous system for planning, and monitoring the effectiveness of the teaching.
- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the centre has comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding young people, which reflect broadly the guidance issued by the Department of Education.
- Based on the evidence at the time of inspection, the parents, staff and school community can have confidence in the aspects of governance evaluated. The management committee contribute effectively to the further developments of the centre and bring a high level of commitment to their role. They have indicated they would welcome further opportunities to have a challenge role in supporting the centre's development planning.

8. Conclusion

In the areas inspected, the quality of the education provided by this centre is good and the pastoral care is very good. The centre has important strengths in most of its educational provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement which the centre has demonstrated the capacity to address. These are to develop and implement:

- measures to ensure that every young person has the opportunity to participate in practical vocational education courses in further education colleges or training organisations in conjunction with the Belfast Education and Library Board and referring schools; and
- a more rigorous system for planning and monitoring the effectiveness of the teaching in meeting the holistic needs of the young people.

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) will monitor the centre's progress on the areas for improvement.

Accommodation/Resources

- The heating in the building especially in the Technology and Design area is inefficient and requires attention.
- The facilities for Technology and Design need to be reviewed and updated.
- The lack of C2k information management systems and infrastructure within this centre is a barrier to learning. In addition the lack of C2K inhibits effective communication or efficient transfer of appropriate educational information with mainstream schools and other education providers.

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