

ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION PROVISION INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Newtownabbey Educational
Guidance Centre

Report of an Inspection
in April 2010

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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%

In assessing the various features of the provision, the Inspectorate relate their evaluations to six descriptors as set out below:

DESCRIPTOR
Outstanding
Very Good
Good
Satisfactory
Inadequate
Unsatisfactory

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The North–Eastern Education and Library Board (NEELB) makes provision for pupils of primary and secondary school age, with social, emotional and behavioural (SEBD) difficulties in the Newtownabbey Educational Guidance Centre (NEGC), Leagreen Primary Referral Unit (Leagreen PRU), and through the Behaviour Outreach Service and the Tuition Service for pupils not in school. The Head of the NEGC manages this provision.

1.2 The NEGC provides full-time education for ten pupils, six in key stage (KS) 3 and four in KS4 for a maximum of three terms with a view to assisting them to develop the skills necessary to re-integrate in school. (See Appendix 1 for details of the referring schools)

1.3 Leagreen PRU is located in the grounds of Glengormley High school and provides full-time education for four pupils in KS1 and four pupils in KS2 who attend the unit for two days and go to their mainstream school for the rest of the week.

1.4 The staff in Leagreen PRU and NEGC provide behaviour outreach support to local primary and secondary schools for two days each week. The behaviour outreach service supports 26 pupils in primary and 50 pupils in post-primary schools.

1.5 The Tuition Service provides individual and group tuition for pupils, aged five to sixteen with a range of social, emotional, behavioural or medical needs that prevent them from attending mainstream school. Tuition takes place in the pupils' home or at an alternative venue. The teachers also provide education for those pupils temporarily without a school place and for school-age mothers.

1.6 The staff are effectively deployed across the provision according to the needs of the pupils. All of the teachers are fully qualified and are very experienced in supporting pupils with SEBD. The Behaviour Support Assistants are well trained and have completed National Vocational Qualifications in childcare at level 3 and other appropriate courses including Team Teach Training in Positive Handling and De-Escalation.

1.7 The pupils are referred by the Educational Psychology service or from a range of appropriate agencies, including a specialist paediatrician. Most of the pupils have received support from NEGC staff in their mainstream schools and will already have been referred by the Educational Psychologist (EP) at stage three of the code of practice. The criteria for referral is appropriate with placements that are timebound and an emphasis on re-integration. Parents and mainstream schools are invited to regular meetings to review the programme and progress of each pupil.

1.8 The focus of the inspection was on the quality of leadership and management, teaching and learning and achievements and standards. The arrangements for pastoral care, including child protection, were also inspected.

1.9 Prior to the inspection, a questionnaire was issued to the parents/carers of the pupils who are educated by NEGC and the linked provision. The confidential questionnaires sought their views on the effectiveness of provision. Of the 65 questionnaires issued to parents, 25 were returned to the Inspectorate Support Branch (ISB) and 15 contained written comments that were highly complimentary of the provision and of the education and care provided by the staff for the pupils. The pupils spoke highly of the provision and of all the staff for whom they expressed high regard.

1.10 Questionnaires were also issued to the support staff; four were returned with one having written comments. A further 28 questionnaires were issued to teaching staff and 12 were returned; six contained written comments. The support staff and teachers'

questionnaires were very positive, with most expressing their support for management and the good working relationships that exist among staff. The very positive comments and small number of issues of concern emerging from the questionnaires and interviews have been reported to the Head of NEGC and NEELB management by the Education and Training Inspectorate (Inspectorate).

1.11 Members of the inspection team met with the senior staff from four of the local schools who refer pupils. Feedback from all of the schools was very positive expressing their support for the provision and how much they value this resource in supporting the pupils. The inspection findings indicate that the NEGC should develop further the current positive working relationships it has established with contributing schools, by exploring the sharing of resources, expertise and specialist facilities.

2. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

2.1 The pupils' standards of achievements were judged in relation to their previous achievements, attendance records and the targets set in their Individual Education Plans (IEPs).

NEWTOWNABBEY EDUCATIONAL GUIDANCE CENTRE

2.2 Achievements and standards in the NEGC educational provision are good. Overall, the pupils are successful in achieving the targets set for them in their IEPs and within the planned learning programmes.

2.3 In the vast majority of instances, the pupils' attendance has improved and, for most the improvement is significant. The average attendance of the post primary pupils from September 2009 until March 2010 was 88%. In one case a pupil with an attendance level of 21% when in school had raised his attendance in the centre to an average of 85%, whilst another had improved attendance from 50% when in school, to 80% at present.

2.4 The pupils attain success in a range of accredited courses (See Appendix 2 for further details). Most improve their levels of literacy and numeracy and this is put to good use in support of their coursework for accreditation. The pupils gain in confidence during their time in NEGC and most can work independently or in pairs or small groups successfully. Some of the older pupils attend the Northern Regional College to participate in vocational courses. Most collaborate effectively, communicate in a social manner and are respectful to the staff and each other. Approximately half of the KS4 pupils referred re-integrate successfully and sustain their places in mainstream schools. There are good procedures in place to support the pupils and the school during the re-integration process. Those who do not re-integrate are prepared for GCSE examinations or take a vocational course and complete their studies in an Education Other Than At School (EOTAS) provision in year 12.

LEAGREEN PRIMARY REFERRAL UNIT

2.5 Achievements and standards in Leagreen are good. The pupils gain confidence from the positive working relationships they enjoy with the staff. They respond positively to the well structured environment and daily routines or activities. They achieve well and show a good awareness of their individual behaviour targets. Most of the pupils re-integrate successfully and sustain their places in mainstream primary school. Links with the primary schools are good and effective support is provided to the schools and the pupils during the process of re-integration. In the majority of instances, the pupils improve their levels of

literacy and numeracy during their time in Leagreen. Lessons are based around a common theme and the pupils participate enthusiastically. The pupils develop their capacity to work independently and can demonstrate good coping skills to enable them to work in pairs and small groups.

TUITION SERVICE

2.6 Achievements and standards in the tuition service are good. The pupils are well supported in their chosen General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) examination subjects and there is clear evidence of progression to enable pupils to continue their studies in their mainstream schools. (See appendix 3) There are effective links with the schools to ensure tutors and pupils keep up to date with the school curriculum. The key impact of this service is the support offered to those who are unwell or unable to attend mainstream school, ensuring they can access sufficient accreditation to provide career options after tuition ends. The tuition is very effective in meeting the needs of individual pupils and offers the degree of flexibility to enable them to continue their studies.

2.7 The inspection identified the following as the main characteristics of the achievements and standards of the pupils across the provision:

- the good level of motivation and engagement with learning displayed by the pupils;
- the significant improvements in the attendance of most of the pupils;
- the ability of the young people to work independently and, at times, collaboratively;
- the success of the pupils in externally accredited qualifications;
- the good behaviour of the pupils;
- the sense of achievement and enjoyment experienced by most of the pupils, including opportunities to re-integrate into their mainstream schools or to keep up to date with examination and coursework requirements.

3. QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNING

3.1 The quality of teaching and learning in the majority of lessons observed across the provision is good or very good, with a small minority of the lessons being outstanding. Lessons are practical and interesting and based on the needs and interests of pupils. A particularly strong feature is the good working relationships between the staff and the pupils, with appropriate boundaries set in place to help the pupils to manage their behaviour and interact effectively. In the less effective practice, the quality of teacher planning is not good enough and the learning across subjects is not connected. Overall, the monitoring of provision is not as good as it needs to be to effect improvement.

3.2 The lack of laptop computers for tutors limits the learning opportunities for pupils receiving tuition.

3.3 The curriculum across the provision is broad, flexible, and supports effectively the pupils' learning and personal development.

3.4 The procedures for monitoring the quality of planning to inform improvement across the provision are not well-developed.

3.5 The main characteristics of the quality of provision for learning are:

- the hard-working and committed staff who provide a calm, welcoming, well-structured environment for the pupils;
- the good teaching methods with their strong emphasis on practical, active lessons and on social and life skills;
- the sensitive approaches of the staff and their understanding and respect for the pupils with whom they work;
- the good attendance of the pupils and the improvement over time of their concentration and engagement in lessons ;
- the appropriate curriculum and approaches to learning that are well- matched to the needs of the pupils e.g. group tuition and vocational courses;
- the good emphasis on retaining links with the mainstream primary and post primary curriculum; and
- the variation in the quality of planning for lessons.

NEWTOWNABBEY GUIDANCE CENTRE

3.6 In KS4, courses are well chosen to engage and motivate the pupils. They study and successfully complete, for example, short courses provided by the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance. The centre delivers the Prince's Trust Award Scheme, which focuses on practical learning and improving key skills. These courses build the self esteem of the pupils and encourage them to re-engage with education. The staff try hard to offer a broad and balanced curriculum but are constrained by limited information and communication technology (ICT) resources and limited facilities for specialist subjects such as science and technology. The home economics curriculum is provided in very poor facilities and additional aspects of accommodation are in need of attention. (See Appendix 4 & 5 for further details) The management is at present exploring ways of providing specialist facilities in partnership with local schools. The inspection team endorses this partnership approach.

LEAGREEN PRIMARY REFERRAL UNIT

3.7 The teachers' planning focuses appropriately on promoting an effective code of behaviour which ensures the pupils have a good awareness of the targets set for them to achieve. The Leagreen code of behaviour is prominently displayed in the unit and the pupils show good awareness of their individual behaviour targets. The staff base their work on a common theme which provides suitable cross-curriculum learning. During the inspection, for example, the KS2 pupils' participation in a very good literacy session on the theme of the rain forests, encouraged extended and interesting writing. The pupils at KS1 were observed, actively involved in well-paced, interesting and varied activities and the staff worked continually to develop the pupils' learning, particularly their personal and social education.

TUITION SERVICE

3.8 The home tuition service provides very good support for individual pupils absent from school for long periods through serious illness or mental health issues. The staff show great skill in working with the pupils in their homes and in the community to enable the pupils to sustain their link with education and often to make good progress and continue their studies to GCSE level.

3.9 The mainstream schools value the outreach support provided on two days each week by the NEGC. In the best practice observed, the outreach teacher worked alongside the mainstream class teacher supporting pupils and modelling good practice in behaviour management.

3.10 The quality of the pastoral care across the provision is very good. The organisation has a caring ethos and the staff show a strong commitment to the care and welfare of the pupils. The pupils feel secure and are aware of what to do if they have any worries about their safety, care and well-being. There is mutual respect among all of the staff and the pupils. Positive working relationships are maintained through promoting and maintaining positive behaviour.

3.11 The centre has satisfactory arrangements in place for safeguarding the pupils. These arrangements broadly reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education. Whilst each centre has separate, distinct child protection policies of a satisfactory standard, it is evident that the NEELB needs to have a single composite child protection policy across all of the providers. The few other areas that need addressed are already planned for by the NEELB.

4. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

4.1 The quality of leadership and management of the provision is good. The Head of NEGC is managing a complex service providing for pupils with different levels and types of need across different locations. Since taking up post in 2008, he has established a number of important developments, such as the introduction of monthly reporting on the progress of pupils receiving tuition, meeting with all tuition staff individually each month, joining the Newtownabbey Learning Community and gaining access to vocational education for older pupils.

4.2 There is good overall leadership across the provision with strong commitment to developing the service. Appropriate actions have been identified within the development plan. The Head of NEGC is well-supported by the Deputy Head who leads effectively the social and emotional programmes including the XL programme. The Head of NEGC recognises the need to develop further the role of the Deputy Head in managing the service and has appropriate plans in place. The senior teacher in Leagreen PRU provides good leadership and effective local management of the unit and support service. The effective teamwork and good relationships among all the staff in the provision has a positive impact on pupils. The staff across the service also demonstrate high levels of commitment to improving the quality of the provision and to raising the standards of the young people's achievements.

4.3 The senior staff within the NEELB provide good support to the heads of the guidance centres and monthly meetings of managers of behaviour support service focus on the effectiveness of the provision. The NEELB has established guidance centres in three geographical locations across the Board area. The introduction of referral units and outreach support for children of primary school age, is an effective strategy in addressing the issues of marginalisation. The strategy is having a positive effect in dealing with the higher

numbers of pupils referred for additional support at a younger age. It is too early to evaluate the wider impact of this strategy; however, the provision of support at the post primary stage is meeting the needs of the majority of those pupils referred.

4.4 There are effective links across the guidance centres and expertise and experience is readily shared. Links with schools are actively encouraged with the staff regularly attending the school-based care team meetings to support individual schools. The NEGC is an active member of the Newtownabbey Learning Community. The NEGC has provided a range of staff development and training opportunities for staff across the provision.

4.5 The main characteristics of the leadership and management of the provision are:

- the good leadership and management shown by the Head of NEGC and the senior staff, and the good relationships and sense of teamwork among the staff;
- the good start made by management in producing a development plan with action plans to create more structure within the organisation;
- the actions taken by the Head of NEGC to create an inclusive integrated service and provide access to vocational training courses;
- the effective management of the social and emotional programme by the Deputy Head of NEGC and the success of the programme in addressing the needs of the pupils; and
- the recognition by the Head of Centre of the need to develop better systems of monitoring and evaluating the provision.

5. OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

5.1 The overall effectiveness of the service indicates strengths in many aspects of the provision.

5.2 The main strengths are:

- the mutual respect between the staff and the pupils;
- the good leadership and strong commitment to developing the service;
- the good standard of learning and teaching, and positive educational and social outcomes for most of the pupils;
- the very positive feedback from the referring schools and parents and the value they attribute to the service.

6. AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

6.1 In order to improve the NEGC provision further, there is a need to:

- improve the quality of planning across the provision;
- develop a better system of monitoring provision to inform improvement; and

- build on the good relationships with the local school sector and implement a policy for sharing expertise, resources and accommodation for the benefit of the pupils.

7. CONCLUSION

7.1 In the areas inspected, the quality of the education provided by the Newtownabbey Educational Guidance Centre is good. The organisation has important strengths in most of the educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified some areas for improvement which the organisation has demonstrated the capacity to address. The Inspectorate will monitor the organisation's progress on the areas for improvement.

The pupils who are taught by NEGC are from the following schools and centres.

Glengormley High School
Hazelwood Integrated College
Ballyclare Secondary School
Carrickfergus College
Monkstown Community School
Newtownabbey Community High School
Downshire High School
Ulidia Integrated College
Edmund Rice College
Linden Services Looked After Children's Residential Home

APPENDIX 2

Qualifications Achieved by 11 Pupils 2008-2009

Headstart Emergency Life support programme	Level 3	11 Pupils	HEADSTART
ASDAN XL Bronze award		9 Pupils	ASDAN
Introduction to substance misuse 1 Credit	Entry Level 3	5 Pupils	Open College Network
Unit awards	16 awards	3 Pupils	AQA
Unit awards	8-12 awards	5 Pupils	AQA
Unit awards	1-4 awards	2 Pupils	AQA

APPENDIX 3**10 Tuition Pupils Achieved 2008-2009**

Progressive Riding test one	Level 1	3 Pupils	British Horse Society
ASDAN XL Bronze award		9 Pupils	ASDAN
English	GCSE Pass	3 Pupils	CCEA
Mathematics	GCSE Pass	3 Pupils	CCEA
History	GCSE Pass	1 Pupil	CCEA
Biology	GCSE Pass	1 pupil	CCEA
English Literature	GCSE Pass	1 pupil	CCEA
Unit awards	1-2 awards	10 Pupils	AQA

Health and Safety

- There are serious health and safety issues in the present NEGC accommodation provided for Home Economics which need to be addressed.

Accommodation

- The external lights at the rear of the building are broken beyond repair and need replaced.
- The single glazed wooden framed windows to the front of the building are in a very poor state of repair and require urgent attention.

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