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*The Education and Training Inspectorate -
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Department for Employment and Learning
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Education and Training Inspectorate

Report of an Inspection

**Rathmore Educational Guidance Centre
Dunadry**

Inspected: May 2007

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Rathmore Educational Guidance Centre (the Centre) is situated in Dunadry and serves a catchment area which includes the Ballymena, Antrim and Larne districts in County Antrim. It is one of three Educational Guidance Centres set up by the North-Eastern Education and Library Board (NEELB) to provide a short-term intervention education for key stage (KS) 3 and KS4 pupils, with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. At the time of the inspection the Centre was providing education for eight KS3 and KS4 pupils. The pupils have a wide range of diverse and complex needs and, as a consequence, the Centre provides a highly specialised provision. The pupils are placed in the Centre for generally not more than three consecutive terms, they are provided with a broad school timetable and nearly all return to full-time education.

1.2 The Centre provides Behaviour Support (Outreach) Services to 58 pupils in 25 mainstream schools in the NEELB area. All teachers in the Centre provide Outreach support in addition to teaching in the Centre. The Outreach Service seeks to support pupils in maintaining their mainstream school placement and plays an important role for pupils returning from the Centre to their own schools.

1.3 The arrangements for the inspection of pastoral care and child protection included the opportunity for the parents to complete a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection. Of the eight questionnaires issued to parents of the pupils who presently attend the Centre, five were returned to the Department of Education (DE) and one contained additional written comments. The parents were supportive of the Centre placement for their children.

1.4 The focus of the inspection was on the quality of provision to meet the individual needs of the pupils and the arrangements for child protection and pastoral care.

2. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

2.1 The Centre is an effective educational provision with major strengths and no significant areas for improvement. There is appropriate emphasis on maintaining the pupils' access to the Northern Ireland Curriculum, on securing accreditation and on modification of their behaviour so as to re-integrate them back into full-time education. Some of the pupils make substantial gains in their behaviour management. During visits to mainstream schools, both staff and pupils who receive Outreach Services from the Centre, expressed their high regard for the behaviour support, advice and training provided.

2.2 The Centre gives consistently good attention to promoting health and well-being and has appropriate policies and programmes in place, which encourage the pupils to adopt healthy lifestyles. There is evidence of commitment on the part of staff to promoting healthy eating and to improving the pupils' eating habits. The pupils demonstrate a good understanding of the importance of making healthy life choices.

2.3 The inspection findings indicate the following achievements and standards:

- the consistently good and, often very good, quality of the teaching; and, in particular, the good practice in the team-work of the teachers and classroom assistant, planning and working together in the classroom for the benefit of each pupil;

- the staff's deep knowledge of the pupils and their skills which are used effectively to provide appropriate support;
- the consistent practice across the classes in the maintenance and sharing of information;
- the consistently good and highly valued work of the Outreach Service in supporting mainstream schools and pupils; and
- the satisfactory behaviour of the pupils in class.

3. THE QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNING

3.1 The quality of teaching and learning is often very good throughout the Centre and is reflected in the thorough and detailed planning and comprehensive assessment of the pupils' needs. The teachers collate relevant information to inform their teaching, establish positive working relationships with the pupils, write appropriate individual education plans and achievable targets. As a consequence, the pupils make good progress. Overall, approximately 83% of the lessons observed were graded consistently good or better; all the Outreach work was graded as outstanding.

3.2 The Centre is implementing fully the guidance outlined in the relevant DE Circulars pertaining to child protection matters. The good quality of pastoral care is a significant feature of the Centre's work and makes a valuable contribution to promoting an atmosphere conducive to teaching and learning. The pastoral care systems are well-developed and communicated to staff to ensure a commonality of approach, and a learning environment in which the welfare of the pupils is prioritised. The pupils expressed confidence that the staff will respond sympathetically and appropriately to their concerns. Strenuous efforts are made to create positive partnerships with parents and relevant agencies.

3.3 The main strengths of the quality of provision for learning are:

- the effective use of a range of teaching approaches, including very good emphasis on active learning, practical activities and pupil involvement;
- the supportive and caring ethos which creates an environment conducive to re-engagement with learning;
- the strong sense of team-work and collaboration at all levels throughout the Centre;
- the effective focus on improving the pupils' behaviour through positive behaviour reinforcement strategies, and anger management training;
- the commitment of all the staff to promoting the highest possible levels of pupil achievement; and
- the successful re-engagement of the pupils and improved attendance and compliance.

4. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

4.1 The quality of the leadership and management of the Centre is very good. The Head of the Centre uses his experience and knowledge to lead effectively. He leads through example, and has established strong and positive working relationships with the staff, the pupils, their parents and many external support agencies. The Deputy Head ably supports the leadership and management of the Centre. The staff bring a breadth of experience and provide valuable support for one another. Self-evaluation of the practice could be further improved through the use of formal structures and instruments.

4.2 The main strengths of the leadership and management of the Centre are:

- the building of staff collegiality leading to their professional empowerment;
- the clear roles and responsibilities of the staff;
- the strong focus on working collaboratively with many of the support agencies of pupils and their families;
- the well-established routines and procedures resulting in the smooth running of the Centre; and
- the close and effective procedures to facilitate communication with the parents.

5. OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

5.1 The overall effectiveness of the Centre is consistently good.

5.2 The main strengths of the provision are:

- the leadership of the Head of the Centre, supported by the staff, in promoting a strong, caring ethos;
- the robust working relationships and team-work throughout the Centre;
- the staff's detailed knowledge of the needs of the pupils, ensuring appropriate planning and teaching;
- the consistently good quality of the teaching;
- the skill and experience of the classroom assistant and the clerical officer;
- the progress made by the pupils in their behaviour; and
- the skills and experience of the teachers on Outreach in supporting, training and empowering teachers in mainstream schools.

6. **AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT**

6.1 The inspection findings indicate that the overall effectiveness of the Centre presents many strengths with no significant areas for improvement. The inspection team recommends:

- the further development of the Centre's structures for recording, analysing and reporting on the pupils' progress;
- a review of the roles and responsibilities of the Head and his Deputy so as to allow a development of services to more schools;
- the development of the Centre's curriculum to provide more access to physical education and outdoor pursuits; and
- providing access to Classroom 2000 for both teachers and pupils.

7. **CONCLUSION**

7.1 In the areas inspected, Rathmore Educational Guidance Centre has major strengths in its educational and pastoral provision. The educational and pastoral needs of the learners are being well met. The parents and the NEELB can have confidence in the Centre's capacity for sustained self-improvement.

No follow-up inspection is required.

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