

# EDUCATION OTHER THAN AT SCHOOL INSPECTION



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

St Joseph's College Special  
Unit (St Vincent's Centre),  
Belfast

Report of an Inspection in  
December 2013

## 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 pupils' written work and held formal and informal discussions with the pupils', teachers and staff with specific responsibilities.

The arrangements for this inspection included:

- a meeting with representatives from the management committee;
- meetings with groups of pupils; 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       | 21            | *               | *                   | *                    |
| Teachers      | 10            | *               | *                   | *                    |
| Support Staff | *             | *               | *                   | *                    |

\* fewer than 5

Most of the parental questionnaire responses are positive. The parents value the progress made by the pupil's and the caring and supportive ethos throughout the centre. The few concerns raised were brought to the attention of the teacher in charge, principal and the board of governors. The teacher and support staff questionnaire responses were very positive, and indicate strong support for the teacher in charge and the work of the centre. The Education and Training Inspectorate reported to the teacher in charge, principal and board of governors, the small number of areas of concern emerging from the questionnaires and, where appropriate, these have been commented on within the report.

## 2. Context

St Vincent's Centre is a specialist provision of St Joseph's College. The centre is located off the Woodstock Road area of east Belfast and managed by a teacher in charge who reports to the principal and board of governors of St Joseph's College. The centre provides specialised education for up to 30 pupils in key stage (KS) 3 and 4, with special educational needs in relation to social emotional and behavioural difficulties. The pupils are mainly from maintained schools in the greater Belfast area and are referred by the Belfast Education and Library Board (BELB) options panel and special needs team. At the time of the inspection 21 pupils from the greater Belfast area were enrolled in the centre.

| St Vincent's Centre          | 2009/10 | 2010/11 | 2011/12 | 2012/13 |
|------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Enrolment                    | 33      | 27      | 26      | 21      |
| % Attendance (NI Average)    | 68      | 46      | 71.1    | 51      |
| FSME Percentage <sup>1</sup> | 100     | 100     | 98      | 98      |
| No. of newcomers             | 0       | 0       | 0       | 2       |

**Source:** data as held by the school.

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

### 3. Focus of inspection

The inspection focused on:

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

### 4. Overall finding

| Overall Performance Level  | SATISFACTORY |
|----------------------------|--------------|
| Achievements and Standards | SATISFACTORY |
| Provision                  | SATISFACTORY |
| Leadership and Management  | SATISFACTORY |

### Key findings of the inspection

#### 5. Achievements and standards

- The majority of the pupils, by the time they complete their education in St Vincent's have developed strategies to cope with their social emotional and behavioural difficulties and gained personal competences to enable them to re-engage with their peers and transition successfully to further education colleges or training organisations.
- The overall achievements attained by the pupils in English and mathematics although low, are satisfactory and commensurate with their significant learning needs on entry to the centre, histories of disrupted schooling, non attendance and social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.
- In the three months prior to the inspection the average attendance in the centre was 78% with six pupils attaining almost 90% attendance and eleven with attendance greater than 70%. The attendance has shown a significant improvement over the last year due to the good work of the staff and the extra efforts they make to encourage pupils to attend. Nevertheless the attendance rate for pupils in KS4 is an issue and a contributing factor in their low achievement in external examinations.
- Most of the pupils in KS4 who attend regularly are achieving accreditation in English, mathematics and occupational studies. The management have recognised the limited range of accreditation available and additional subjects such as Learning for Life and Work, certificate of personal effectiveness and home economics have been offered this year.

- The KS4 pupils can work independently or with others for most of the time and most have positive attitudes to learning. The majority of the pupils in KS3 respond to the high levels of support provided within lessons and the additional numeracy and literacy support recently put in place; almost all pupils remain in the centre to complete GCSE examinations in year 12.
- The pupils are given the opportunity to participate in practical, vocational education courses in motor vehicle repair, carpentry, catering and hair and beauty, which enhance their career pathways and provide access to a training placement with an external training organisation. Most transfer to courses of their choice in further education or training organisations upon leaving the centre.

## **6. Provision**

- In the majority of lessons observed, the quality of teaching is good; in the most effective practice the lessons are based on the interests of the pupils and the learning is closely matched to their needs and ability. The teachers employ a range of teaching approaches with clear learning intentions and appropriate pace and challenge. The individual education plans are clear and have good strategies and targets to support pupils and guide lesson planning.
- Lesson planning is of a good standard generally but planning for KS3 pupils could be developed further to include thematic teaching units based on the interests of the pupils that will develop their literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills.
- Most classrooms have interactive whiteboards and data projectors but almost all of the computers are old and need to be replaced. The absence of the C2k in the centre prevents pupils from accessing the range of educational programmes available to their peers in mainstream schools. (Appendix1.)
- The pupils benefit from the good provision for careers information education advice and guidance. Those in KS 4 benefit from the appropriate placements for work experience and opportunities to take part in mock employment interviews.
- Most staff have availed of opportunities for staff development over the past year and they meet each afternoon to reflect on their practice and discuss strategies for individual pupils who may need additional support.
- The pupils study physical education, art, home economics and technology and design in specialist facilities however there are no opportunities to study languages, ICT or science making re-integration difficult and limiting the career pathways for the pupils.
- The behaviour management policy is not fully implemented across the centre; a more consistent approach is needed with an effective system of rewards and incentives to encourage the pupils to achieve and attend.
- The centre's accommodation is clean and in good repair however the building is old and in poor decorative order requiring some modernisation, painting and redecoration. (Appendix 2.) There are very limited funds available to purchase resources and provide additional opportunities for the pupils to learn and develop new skills outside of the classroom.

- The quality of the pastoral care is satisfactory. In discussions with the inspection team, the pupils reported that they feel safe in the centre, and are aware of what to do if they have any concerns about their safety and well-being. The staff maintain a caring non-judgemental ethos and show a commitment to the care and welfare of the pupils. The teachers should look for greater opportunities to interact with the pupils outside of the formal class setting to further strengthen the positive working relationships.

## **7. Leadership and management**

- The teacher in charge provides effective leadership and since his appointment in 2012, he has identified and implemented an appropriate programme of improvement in the pastoral and academic provision. The improvements will take time to ensure improved outcomes and raise standards but the evidence shows progress has been made in many areas and is ongoing. The teacher in charge is supported by the principal and management of St Joseph's College and has drawn up an effective centre development plan. The plan includes actions to enable the pupils to access their mainstream schools for aspects of the curriculum and learn alongside their peers. He requires clear guidance on what the centre's remit is so that a more comprehensive development plan can be developed and applied more purposefully.
- The classroom assistants show a high degree of support and commitment to the pupils and are effective in de-escalating behavioural issues and guiding pupils to re-engage in lessons.
- The role of the youth worker is unclear and not sufficiently defined. Subsequently, the pupils are not provided with sufficient opportunities to develop the skills required to socialise and work effectively with others in small groups and teams.
- In practice, the centre does not re-integrate pupils to their former schools. The evidence indicates that most pupils by the end of KS3 make sufficient improvement in their learning, social competence and capacity and could be expected to re-integrate. Some pupils are placed in the centre in year 8 and remain in the centre for all of their post primary education. This practice should be reconsidered and an inclusion policy adopted to ensure that when practical those pupils who can demonstrate appropriate skills and willingness should be given the opportunity to learn alongside their peers in mainstream school.
- 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.

## **8. Conclusion**

In the areas inspected, the quality of the education provided by this centre is satisfactory. The strengths outweigh areas for improvement in the provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement, which need to be addressed if the needs of all the pupils are to be met more effectively.

The main areas for improvement; the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools, the Belfast Education and Library Board and the management and governors of St Joseph's College should endeavour to address the following issues:

- the need to provide clear guidance regarding the remit of the centre to include, the financial support required to manage the centre, the opportunities for the pupils to re-integrate to their referring school and have greater opportunities to access the full statutory curriculum;
- improve the provision for ICT within the centre to a comparable level to that provided within mainstream schools; and
- extend the range of accredited courses available for pupils in KS4.

The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor and report on the centre's progress in addressing the areas for improvement over a 12-24 month period.



### **Information and Communication Technology**

- 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. The recent audit conducted by the ICT technician details deficiencies in the provision that provides a major barrier to learning for all the pupils and in particular highlights concerns regarding the unrestricted access to the internet.

### Accommodation

**Location is a major issue and consideration is needed regarding the centre's accommodation issues and isolation.**

- There is a need for management to conduct a fire safety audit of the entire centre and implement any recommendations.
- Many of the exterior windows are single glazed windows and have metal frames that are ill fitting; consequently there is an adverse effect on the pupils' learning due to cold and drafts. This situation also adds to the centre heating costs.
- The building is in a poor decorative order and requires some modernisation, painting and decoration.
- The exterior of the building is in poor condition and in need of refurbishment.
- The building is extremely difficult to heat and some rooms with three exterior walls are very cold and have a detrimental effect on learners.
- The automatic locking systems on classroom doors are unsuitable and create an ethos of exclusion and confinement that has a negative effect on pupils.
- The grassed play area is poorly drained and unsuitable for pupils to use when they need time out or space to reflect, calm down or play.

### Technology and Design

**There is an urgent need for management to carry out a health and safety audit of the Technology and Design department and implement the recommendations.**

- The room should not be used until the audit is completed and remedial work carried out.

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