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**Department of Education
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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Education and Training Inspectorate

Report of an Inspection

**St Peter's Immaculata Youth Centre
Belfast**

Inspected: October 2007

CONTENTS

Section		Page
1.	BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT	1
2.	ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS	2
3.	QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNING	2
4.	QUALITY OF LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	3
5.	STRENGTHS OF THE PROVISION	3
6.	AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT	3
7.	CONCLUSION	4
	APPENDIX	

1. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

1.1 St Peter's Immaculata Youth Centre (centre) is a full-time voluntary youth centre situated in the grounds of St Peter's Cathedral in the Divis area of Belfast. It is funded through the Belfast Education and Library Board (BELB). According to figures supplied by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency the centre is in one of the most disadvantaged areas in Northern Ireland; it has a population of 5,046 with 28.6% under the age of 16 years. In 1944 the Legion of Mary established the Immaculata Boys' Club with the emphasis on providing sporting activities. The centre is affiliated to the Down and Connor Youth Commission and sets out to provide, maintain and promote facilities and activities of a social, spiritual, educational and recreational nature, with the object of improving the conditions of the lives of children and young people without distinction of sex, political, religious or other opinion. The centre has long-established and successful boxing and football sections; the football section makes good use of the local recreational facilities including the Falls Park.

1.2 The centre returned the following membership figures to the BELB and thus satisfied the basic expectations of full-time youth centres as stipulated by them. The figures include both the boxing and football sections.

Year	Total Membership	% of Membership between 13-19 years of age
2004/05	142	85 (60%)
2005/06	318	151 (47%)
2006/07	355	136 (38%)
2007/08	275	85 (30%)

During the inspection, however, the core membership had fallen to 25 children and young people. This significant decline was attributed to the closure of the premises for refurbishment and repairs, something that had been anticipated for several months.

1.3 In 2006 the full-time youth worker secured £250,000 from the Belfast Regeneration Office along with monies from the Department of Education (DE), to finance the repair and redesign of the premises. Following a report provided after the pre-inspection visit, the centre's activities were relocated to other venues within the local community. The building work has not yet commenced in the centre.

1.4 The centre is staffed by a full-time youth worker and five part-time youth workers. The full-time youth worker has developed links with the Falls Youth Providers, a sub-group of the Falls Partnership initiative, to provide a range of additional events and opportunities for the children and young people attending the centre. This co-operation is illustrated by the recent summer provision which the staff report to be a significant aspect of the centre's provision.

1.5 During the pre-inspection visit, the Education and Training Inspectorate (Inspectorate) identified significant deficiencies in the accommodation, and health and safety and child protection issues. The Inspectorate advised the Management Committee and the BELB that the situation needed to be addressed as a matter of urgency and also reported their concerns to DE. As a result, the building was closed down and alternative provision within the area was

found. The boxing section, which operates from separate premises, gave similar cause for concern. It was accepted by the Management Committee and the youth workers that the inspection should proceed to provide a baseline for taking the youth provision forward.

1.6 Two members of the Inspectorate evaluated the work of the centre, including the arrangements for child protection and pastoral care. The inspection team held informal, as well as structured, discussions with the young people attending the centre along with the staff, the Management Committee, several parents and officers from the BELB. Further evidence was gathered through the direct observation of 20 hours of youth work including craft, cookery, and specific project work in Roden Street Recreation Centre and the Frank Gillen Centre.

2. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

2.1 The inspection identified a few good examples of sessions in which the young people develop new skills and interests. These include projects such as ‘Unsung Heroes’ and the design of the centre’s website. There is evidence that when the young people are provided with focused programmes, they respond positively and are well motivated. The current programme does not, however, provide sufficient opportunities to support the personal and social development of the young people.

2.2 The core group of 25 young people aged between eight and 16 years demonstrate high levels of commitment and enjoyment. Their standards of behaviour and engagement are good.

2.3 The evidence from the inspection indicates that the attendance and membership are insufficient to sustain a full-time youth worker.

3. QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNING

3.1 The planning for, and assessment of, the current programme does not reflect adequately the core curriculum, ‘A Model for Effective Practice’. The planning for each session focuses too much on recreational activities and needs to have a clearer focus on the personal and social development of the young people and the progression of their skills and knowledge. There is little evidence of the use of assessment to recognise and celebrate the young people’s achievements and to inform future planning.

3.2 There are opportunities for the young people to meet and work with other groups and individuals from the local and wider community. These groups include the Falls Youth Providers’ Forum, local schools, the Belfast City Council, and Youth Action. To ensure that the young people benefit fully from these links, their potential usefulness needs to be assessed and agreed by the Management Committee as part of the overall strategic programme for the centre and then systematically integrated into its work.

3.3 The Management Committee recognises that the child protection policies and procedures within the centre, and in the associated sporting activities, need to be reviewed urgently. The centre needs to ensure that the policies are informed by, and shared with, the young people, parents and all relevant parties.

4. QUALITY OF LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

4.1 The Management Committee secured funding for urgent repairs and refurbishment of the centre in 2006. In conjunction with the BELB, it needs to review without delay the current provision to ensure that the young people are provided with at least a safe and secure environment. The full-time youth worker has been innovative in accessing alternative provision given the unacceptable condition of the centre reported at the pre-inspection visit.

4.2 The staff reflect a range of experience which includes expertise in dancing, drama, photography, and working with children under 10 years of age. Their regular attendance and genuine interest in the young people demonstrate that they are committed to supporting the young people in the area. There is a need to identify and meet their staff development requirements and for the full-time leader to provide more leadership in developing the professional competence of the team.

4.3 The Management Committee needs to review the roles and responsibilities at all levels to ensure the efficient deployment of staff, including that of the full-time youth worker. Currently the centre duplicates the after-school provision in the local community, rather than providing quality face-to-face youth work with older young people.

4.4 It is a matter of urgency that the Management Committee and the BELB work together to assess the breadth and quality of the provision and the numbers attending the centre regularly and subsequently, draw up an action plan to address the issues raised in this report. Significant external support is required to effect improvement in the range and quality of the youth provision.

4.5 The BELB does not have in place adequate monitoring procedures to ensure the centre's compliance with the BELB's own basic expectations of youth provision and child protection procedures.

5. STRENGTHS OF THE PROVISION

5.1 The strengths of the provision include:

- the commitment of the staff to provide a range of services for the children and the young people in challenging circumstances;
- the few examples of good group work programmes; and
- the development of external links with the wider community.

6. AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

6.1 The areas for improvement include the need for:

- an urgent review of all child protection policies and procedures in all sections of the centre;

- an urgent review by the Management Committee, in conjunction with the BELB, of the adequacy and quality of the current provision, including the centre's self-evaluation procedures; and
- a review of the roles and responsibilities at all levels of management.

7. **CONCLUSION**

7.1 The inspection has identified major areas for improvement in the centre's work. The areas for improvement need to be addressed urgently in the interests of the young people.

The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor regularly and report within 12 months on the centre's progress in addressing these areas for improvement.

APPENDIX

HEALTH AND SAFETY

The accommodation of St Peter's Immaculata Youth Centre is poor and there are significant health and safety issues, namely:

- locked fire exits;
- inaccessible fire extinguishers;
- a lack of external lighting;
- inadequate security at the entrance to the centre; and
- faulty wiring and electrical fittings.

It will be important that written risk assessments are carried out in each of the out-centres used to provide alternative provision for the centre's work, and that the Management Committee take any necessary action to ensure that the young people are safe and secure.

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