



*The Education and Training Inspectorate -
Promoting Improvement*



Providing Inspection Services for
**Department of Education
Department for Employment and Learning
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure**



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Education and Training Inspectorate

Report of an Inspection

Upper Andersonstown Community Forum, Youth Education and Training Project

Inspected: May 2009

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Upper Andersonstown Community Forum was established in 1995 and is a community-led organisation which is engaged in a range of projects including, youth education and training, job training funded through the Department for Employment and Learning, youth services and a community volunteering scheme established in 2003 to address the needs of the young people between the ages of 15 and 25 in the local area who were marginalised and failing to benefit from education. The project was originally funded under the Peace II initiative through Youthnet from 2003-06. Local schools who refer their pupils to the project in recent years buy places on a part-time or full-time basis.

1.2 The project provides alternative full-time education and training programmes for young people, nine in year 12 and eight in year 11, who come from seven north west Belfast post-primary schools. The schools who refer pupils to the project are Christian Brothers' School, De La Salle College, St Louise's College, Corpus Christi College, St Rose's College, St Colm's College, and Malone College.

1.3 The senior staff in the referring schools identify those young people who are disengaging from formal education, having serious difficulties in school or not attending school. The young people are referred to the project after consultation with their parents. The young people must agree to attend and engage effectively with the project. The project operates from Monday to Friday each week with some young people placed on work experience when it is deemed appropriate by the project staff.

1.4 There are a total of 81 young people attending full- or part-time education courses in the project. Most of the young people who attend live relatively close to the project. There are 17 young people, nine girls and eight boys, engaged in full-time education and training in the project. These young people attend between 25 to 30 hours per week and a further 64 young people from four of the referring post-primary schools participate in part-time courses between one to three sessions per week.

1.5 The focus of the inspection was on the quality of the provision and the arrangements for pastoral care, including child protection.

1.6 Prior to the inspection a questionnaire was issued to the parents/carers of the young people that are attending the project. The confidential questionnaires seek their views on the effectiveness of the provision. Of the 25 questionnaires issued to parents, four were returned to the Department of Education (DE) and contained written comments that were highly complimentary of the project and of the education and care provided for the young people. During the inspection, the young people spoke highly of the project and of the staff for whom they expressed high regard.

1.7 Members of the inspection team met with the education welfare officer (EWO) for two local schools and senior staff from three of the referring schools. Feedback from all of the schools and the EWO was very complimentary expressing their support for the project and how much they value this resource in supporting the young people. These schools use the project to provide personal development courses for junior pupils and enrichment classes for sixth form pupils. The schools all expressed an interest in developing further courses and closer links with the project.

2. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

2.1 The project's educational provision is good. The inspection found strengths in many aspects of the provision, with some areas for improvement which need to be addressed. The majority of the young people make good progress in managing their difficulties while in the project and all make some progress with academic work gaining accreditation in essential skills, literacy and numeracy, General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) mathematics, GCSE English, the European Computer Driving Licence and various Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA) unit awards (see Appendix). The records indicate that 70% of the young people over the 2007-08 period achieved further education or training placements.

2.2 The inspection findings indicate the following achievements and standards:

- the good motivation of the young people to engage with learning;
- the good behaviour of the young people who respond well to the high standards expected of them by the staff;
- the success of the young people who all achieve some accreditation in the project;
- the significant improvements in the attendance of the young people; and
- the significant number of young people who progress to further education and employment.

2.3 The average attendance of the young people from September 2008 until April 2009 is 90%. In addition, of the 17 young people who left the project in June 2008, 12 went on to further education or training, four went into full-time employment and one was unemployed.

3. QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNING

3.1 The quality of instruction and learning is good and courses are chosen to engage and motivate the young people, for example, AQA short course unit awards are studied with accreditation gained within a short time span. This builds the self-esteem of the young people and encourages them to engage with education. The present curriculum is too limited; there is a need to broaden the learning programme to include opportunities for vocational education, creative and expressive activities and physical education. The management is at present exploring ways of providing home economics in partnership with local schools. There is a need to develop thematic teaching units that are based on the interests and needs of the young people that will develop their numeracy, literacy, information and communication technology (ICT) and connect their learning.

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

- the good working relationships and mutual respect evident between the staff and the young people;
- the good quality of the instruction, patience, care and understanding of the staff for the young people;

- the good collaboration between the schools and the project which enhances the work of the school and enables the young people to remain interested in and benefit from education; and
- the positive impact of the work of all staff in the project, including the youth workers and the training and education co-ordinator that provides the young people with much needed additional support for their needs and those of their families.

3.3 The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care within the project is very good. The project promotes an inclusive and supportive ethos. The staff are non-judgemental and make a valuable contribution to the young people's emotional well-being and their learning experiences. All of the pupils interviewed reported that they feel safe in the project and they are aware of what to do if they have any concerns. The project makes good use of other agencies to support the pupils and their families.

3.4 The project has satisfactory arrangements in place for safeguarding the young people. These arrangements reflect broadly the guidance issued by DE. The Belfast Health and Social Care Trust delivered the "Keeping Safe" child protection course to all of the staff in the project in April 2009. Arrangements are in place for additional child protection training by the Belfast Education and Library Board (BELB) for a designated person to take place in the autumn term. This will align the education and health policies, procedures and training.

3.5 An important strength of the provision is the ability to access expertise from within the wider organisation; for example the youth workers deliver the personal development programmes and the training and education co-ordinator organises mock interviews, employer and training workshops and facilitates the placements of young people in training or employment on leaving the project. A family support service has recently been established as part of the forum offering support to the young people who attend the project and their families. Those young people who are school age parents can avail of the crèche facilities on site enabling them to continue their studies.

3.6 The management of the project has recognised the need for a service level agreement with the schools that refer young people directly to the project. This agreement has been developed and will be implemented in September 2009. The inspection team recommends that the placement of young people in the project who have statements of special educational needs should be discussed and agreed with the BELB and endorsed by DE in keeping with the requirements of article 10-12 of the Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1996.

3.7 This project is funded by the schools that refer young people directly to it. The funding is insufficient to meet the needs of the young people. The unsatisfactory funding arrangements impact adversely on the planning to broaden the curriculum on offer and the employment and retention of suitably qualified staff.

4. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

4.1 The quality of the leadership and management of the project is good. The project is managed by an experienced teacher who manages the project well and is ably supported by the other members of staff.

4.2 A key strength of the project is the access to a range of support services available as part of the community forum. The managers of the services are based in the project and this sharing of resources, knowledge, expertise and services provides a great support network for the young people and their families.

4.3 There are excellent links between the referring schools and the project staff. The staff from the referring schools visit the project regularly and also involve junior pupils at risk of disaffection in courses available through the project. These schools hold the project in high regard and are willing to develop closer links and courses and share resources.

4.4 Two young people have reintegrated to their school's post-16 provision after attending the project to study for additional qualifications. Some sixth form pupils attend computer classes in the project on a part-time basis. The referring schools encourage their pupils attending the project to identify with them.

4.5 The main strengths of the leadership and management of the project are:

- the strong commitment of the director of the forum, the project manager and the staff to developing and facilitating the education and pastoral care of the young people in their care and the excellent working relationships and team-work that exists in this project;
- the knowledge and resourcefulness of the project manager in accessing expertise from within the forum and beyond the local community, to support the young people attending the project;
- the staff's commitment to supporting the young people attending the project during transition and when the young people leave the project;
- the excellent working relationships with referring schools who visit the project regularly and the strong partnerships that are developing;
- the strong efforts made by staff to support those young people with special educational needs when attending interviews and applying for further training or employment; and
- the good relationships that exist with parents.

5. OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

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

The main strengths are:

- the mutual respect between the staff and the young people;
- the high level of support offered to the young people whilst in the project and in transition to training, employment and upon leaving the project;

- the excellent ICT facility and the high quality tuition empowering the young people to achieve academic success;
- the positive outcomes for the young people, the majority of whom find employment or training upon leaving the project;
- the progress made by the young people in terms of their self-confidence, good attendance and ability to cope with their difficulties and achieve academic success; and
- the highly positive feedback from the referring schools who have stated how much they value the project and are willing to develop further collaborative courses and share resources.

6. AREA FOR IMPROVEMENT

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

- develop a broader curriculum with opportunities for the young people to access vocational courses, physical education provision and creative and expressive activities in collaboration with local schools to increase the range of accreditation routes available.

7. CONCLUSION

7.1 In the areas inspected, the quality of the education provided by this project is good. The project has important strengths in most of the educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified an area for improvement which the project has demonstrated the capacity to address. The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor the project's progress on the area for improvement.

APPENDIX

UPPER ANDERSONSTOWN COMMUNITY FORUM, YOUTH EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROJECT

ACCREDITATION 2007-2008 TOTAL OF 22 YOUNG PEOPLE

	Level 1	Entry level 2	Entry level 3
Essential Skills Literacy	7	2	8
Essential Skills Numeracy	4	5	7

	Level 1	Level 2
European Computer Driving Licence British Computer Society	22	9

	Grade C
GCSE Learning for Life and work	1
GCSE Mathematics	2
GCSE English	2

Youth Achievement Award ASDAN Bronze	12
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AQA Unit Awards various	356
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