



Education and Training
Inspectorate

The Link Centre, Belfast

Report of a Sustaining Improvement
Inspection in November 2017



The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education
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Sustaining Improvement Inspection of The Link Centre, Belfast, BT12 4AJ

Introduction

The previous inspection in November 2014 evaluated the overall effectiveness of The Link Centre as outstanding¹. Since the last inspection a sustaining improvement inspection (SII) was conducted on 27 November 2017.

Focus of the inspection

The purpose of the SII was to evaluate the extent to which the centre is capable of demonstrating its capacity to effect improvement through self-evaluation and effective centre development planning. The centre also provided evidence of provision for safeguarding as part of the inspection.

The areas of focus during the SII were:

- the effective baseline assessment of pupil social and emotional areas of need and the setting of appropriate individual targets, with strategies to achieve them; and
- the development of individual transition guidance and post-Link centre support packages to guide teaching staff in how to facilitate successful pupil re-integration on their return to school.

Key findings

- The centre is effectively using a baseline assessment system to identify the social, emotional and academic needs of pupils with strategies to enable them to manage their emotions and difficulties in school. The centre can identify the priorities for intervention before placement, using the assessment systems and are supported effectively by the educational psychologists in planning strategies for supporting individual pupils. The sharing of information and in depth analysis informs whole centre and individual education planning and development with a focus on improving practice and outcomes.
- The assessment outcomes are used effectively to set individual targets for pupils and success criteria. The educational psychologist and centre staff meet on a regular basis to review pupil progress and plan how to address the range of challenges and difficulties that pupils experience. The secondary pupil support service at the Link Centre has successfully supported almost six hundred pupils from schools across Belfast over the past year. Almost all of those pupils on individual outreach programmes have maintained their place in school this year.
- The management have prioritised the development of transition guidance packages to guide teachers in referring schools in effective behaviour management strategies to support pupils on their return to school. Whilst the guidance is in the early stages of development the information is used well to inform teachers in planning individual education plans, targets and goals. Progress is monitored and support provided appropriately with effective interventions and high expectations. The centre data indicates that 22 pupils were provided with short term placements of up to 3 days in the centre for 12 to 16 weeks this year and almost all have maintained their school placements. Most of the placement pupils improved their attendance since attending the centre and twenty pupils attained a total of 215 short course Assessment and Qualification Alliance unit awards in 32 subject areas.

¹ From September 2015, the overall effectiveness of a school previously evaluated as outstanding or very good has been reported as a school demonstrating a high level of capacity for sustained improvement.

During the inspection, the centre provided evidence that the arrangements for safeguarding pupils reflects the guidance from the Department of Education.

Conclusion

The Link Centre continues to demonstrate a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will continue to monitor how the centre sustains improvement.

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