



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Time Out for Positive Steps, Belfast Hospital School

Report of an inspection (Involving
Action Short of Strike)
in June 2018



The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

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1. Context

The TOPS Project (Time Out for Positive Steps), part of Belfast Hospital School, is situated in Belfast city centre. It was established in 2011 in response to the increasing numbers of young pupils presenting with emotional health and well-being issues and anxiety-based school refusal. The project provides for Key Stage Four pupils from across Belfast who have all been referred by the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). All of the pupils receive CAMHS support throughout the duration of their placement at TOPS. There is an acting-principal and acting centre manager supported by one full-time teacher, five part-time teachers and a full-time classroom assistant.

Four of the teaching unions which make up the Northern Ireland Teachers' Council (NITC) have declared industrial action primarily in relation to a pay dispute. This includes non-co-operation with the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI). Prior to the inspection, the organisation informed the ETI that all of the teachers would not be co-operating with the inspectors. The ETI have a statutory duty to monitor, inspect and report on the quality of education under Article 102 of the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986. Therefore, the inspection proceeded and the following evaluations are based on the evidence as made available at the time of the inspection.

2. Views of parents and staff

A small number of parents and staff responded to the questionnaires. The parents were very appreciative of the warmth, encouragement, empathy and supportive family ethos provided by the staff which has enabled their children to re-engage with and enjoy learning. The staff questionnaires were wholly positive and affirmed the positive working environment and the leadership provided by management. The questionnaire returns from the referring schools indicated strong satisfaction with the work of the centre. Issues concerning the lack of involvement of a minority referring schools in not visiting the centre to monitor the pastoral and academic progress made by their pupils were discussed (maintaining the confidentiality of the respondents) with those responsible for governance and with senior leaders.

3. Focus of inspection

The inspection focused on:

- the outcomes for pupils; in particular, how the organisation is addressing individual needs;
- the quality of provision in the organisation; and
- the quality of leadership and management.

4. Overall findings of the inspection

Overall effectiveness	Unable to assure the quality of education
Outcomes for learners	No performance available
Quality of provision	No performance available
Leadership and management	No performance available
Outreach provision	No performance available

5. Outcomes for learners

- The group of pupils with whom the inspectors met were articulate, welcoming and engaging in their discussions.
- Over the past three years a majority of the pupils achieved GCSE grade A*-C in English and just over half achieved GCSE grade A*-C in mathematics. In the same period, one third of the pupils achieved five GCSE qualifications at grade A*-C.
- Last year almost all of the pupils achieved an appropriate literacy and numeracy qualification.
- Last year all of the pupils transitioned and maintained appropriate placements to further education, training or school.
- Of the most recent cohort of pupils, all improved their attendance from the mainstream school, with over one- third having attendance over 90%.

The ETI was unable to evaluate fully:

- the overall outcomes for the pupils;
- progression in the pupil's learning; and
- the pupil's wider skills and dispositions.

6. Quality of provision

- An appropriate curriculum is provided by the centre based on the health, ability and interests of the individual pupils. The pupils do not have the opportunity to study vocational subjects.
- A number of assessment and diagnostic tests are completed with pupils to baseline and then track their progress and to select the appropriate numeracy and literacy qualification for each pupil. Interventions have been arranged to provide additional support to those pupils who require it.
- The pupils' social and emotional wellbeing is developed through a number of therapeutic and preventative programmes. The centre has also begun to use an assessment system to baseline the social and emotional needs of the pupils to inform more individualised interventions.
- The toilet facilities for pupils are located some distance from the main classrooms on another floor of the building; this arrangement is unsuitable. (Appendix A)
- The centre has robust systems in place to monitor and analyse the progress of the pupils. Generally the referring schools do not engage sufficiently with the centre at the initial referral stage, preventing effective joint planning of education programmes for their pupils. In addition most schools do not monitor and track the academic or pastoral progress of their pupils by visiting them in the centre each term.

The ETI was unable to evaluate:

- the effectiveness of the guidance and support in bringing about high quality individual learning experiences;
- the effectiveness and impact of planning, teaching, learning and assessment in promoting successful learning; and
- care and welfare

7. Leadership and management

- While there are service level agreements between the pupils' schools and the centre, the centre has identified the need to review the service level agreements to ensure that schools work more closely with the centre in monitoring the progress and well-being of their pupils.
- A number of audits have been completed by curricular leaders to develop further the provision and the effectiveness of planned actions.
- The governors are well informed about the life and work of the centre through regular meetings and curricular updates. They have a range of expertise, experience and medical knowledge that is essential to understand the needs of the pupils and how to support the acting principal and management.
- It will be important that the employing authority, centre governors and the staff plan for, and manage, issues related to the sustainability of the centre provision and budget, in order to address the current and future needs of the pupils and the staff.

The ETI was unable to evaluate fully:

- the effectiveness and impact of the strategic leadership;
- the effectiveness and impact of the middle leadership;
- the effectiveness of action to promote and sustain improvement, including self-evaluation and the development planning process; and
- governance

8. Safeguarding

Based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the arrangements for safeguarding pupils reflect broadly the guidance from the Department of Education. The pupils report that they feel safe in the organisation and that they are aware of what to do if they have any concerns about their safety or welfare. They confide with members of staff and report positive working relationships and support to help them learn. A comprehensive suite of safeguarding and pastoral policies are in place. However, owing to the action short of strike, the ETI was unable to evaluate fully the outworking of the arrangements for safeguarding in the school.

9. Overall effectiveness

Owing to the impact of the action short of strike being taken by the centre staff, the ETI is unable to assure parents/carers, the wider community and stakeholders of the quality of education being provided for the pupils. The organisation is a high priority for future inspection with no further notice.

Health and safety/accommodation

The toilet facilities for the pupils are located away from the classroom area on another floor. There is a need to provide modern toilet facilities located beside the classroom area that can be monitored more discreetly.

Statistical data

TOPS EOTAS	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Enrolment	33	20	20	20
% Attendance	76	73	74	N/A
% FSME ¹	35	31	24	23
Newcomers	N/A	N/A	*	N/A

Source: data as held by the organisation.

* fewer than 5

N/A not available

¹ The term 'FSME Percentage' refers to the percentage of young people entitled to free school meals.

Inspection methodology and evidence base

The ETI's Inspection and Self-Evaluation Framework is available on the ETI website at [Inspection and Self-evaluation Framework: EOTAS](#)

Inspectors held formal and informal discussions with senior managers for the centre and held informal discussions with pupils (in a group).

The arrangements for this inspection included a meeting with representatives from the governance group and the opportunity for all parents, teaching and support staff to complete a confidential questionnaire.

Quantitative terms used by the Education and Training Inspectorate

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 when reporting on Achievements and outcomes, on Provision for learning and on Leadership and management:

Outstanding
Very good
Good
Important area(s) for improvement
Requires significant improvement
Requires urgent improvement

Overall effectiveness

The ETI use one of the following inspection outcomes when evaluating the overall effectiveness of the organisation.

The organisation has a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor how the organisation sustains improvement.
The organisation demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor how the organisation sustains improvement.
The organisation needs to address (an) important area(s) for improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor and report on the organisation's progress in addressing the area(s) for improvement. There will be a formal follow-up inspection.
The organisation needs to address urgently the significant areas for improvement identified in the interest of all learners. It requires external support to do so. The ETI will monitor and report on the organisation's progress in addressing the areas for improvement. There will be a formal follow-up inspection.

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