



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

Strabane EOTAS,  
County Tyrone

Report of an inspection in  
March 2018



The Education and Training Inspectorate  
Promoting Improvement

Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education  
Department for the Economy  
and other commissioning Departments



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## 1. Context

Strabane Education Other Than at School (EOTAS) centre is situated in the grounds of Knockavoe School in a residential area in Strabane. The centre provides education for pupils in key stage (KS) 4 who have social emotional, health or behaviour difficulties. The centre is managed by a senior teacher with a permanent youth worker and three temporary part-time teachers. The uncertainty over when the Education Authority will make teaching posts permanent is making the retention of experienced staff and the building of specialist expertise within the centre difficult.

All of the young people have histories of disrupted schooling and non-attendance; two-thirds of those in the centre have not attended school for significant periods of time. Almost all of the young people have social, emotional and health difficulties, significant gaps in their learning and below average levels of attainment when they first attend the centre.

## 2. Views of parents and staff

Most of the parents (6) and all of the referring schools and all of the EOTAS staff responded to the questionnaires. All of the parental questionnaires were very positive and some expressed their appreciation for the care and support shown by EOTAS staff for their children. The referring schools were positive in their responses to the questionnaires and supportive of the management of the centre and the expertise of the staff that enables the pupils to manage their difficulties and have positive outcomes when they leave the centre. All of the staff questionnaires indicated strong support for the work of the centre.

## 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

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	High level of capacity for sustained improvement.
<b>Outcomes for learners</b>	Very good
<b>Quality of provision</b>	Very Good
<b>Leadership and management</b>	Very Good

## 5. Outcomes for learners

- Almost all pupils at the time of inspection were courteous, respectful and articulate in discussions with inspectors. They have developed warm, positive working relationships with the teaching staff and are making good progress in terms of their emotional and social development.

- The majority have improved their attendance since beginning placement in the centre, the centre's data indicates the average attendance of the pupils in the three months prior to the inspection was 83% with the majority of the pupils having over 90% attendance during the previous month.
- The pupils are developing the skills to manage their emotions and become resilient, including through the Prince's Trust level 1 and 2 qualification and with support from staff. They are becoming more independent, developing their confidence to overcome barriers to learning; they are capable of working in small groups within different settings.
- The pupils study a range of accredited courses including Essential Skills communication and numeracy, GCSE English, mathematics, art and design, and information and communication technology (ICT). A small number of pupils have attended some classes in their referring school.
- The majority of the pupils attend occupational studies vocational courses in construction, engineering, catering, and hair and beauty in the North West Regional College.
- In the previous academic year, all of the year 12 pupils in the centre achieved a numeracy and literacy qualification. The majority achieved five or more qualifications that enabled them to gain access to further courses of study or employment. The pupils achieve well in relation to their baseline assessment, in qualifications in literacy, numeracy and ICT at essential skills level, and including GCSE level, where appropriate. The quality of the written work, oracy and listening skills of the pupils is good and for a minority it is of a very good standard.
- The centre monitors carefully and prepares the pupils well for transition to further education or employment. The centre tracks the pupils and the data indicates that almost all of the pupils progress to further education or training courses of their choice. All of the previous cohort have successfully sustained their placements.

## **6. Quality of provision**

- The curriculum provides interest, enjoyment and appropriate challenge for the pupils. The referring schools engage with the centre at the initial referral stage, and there is effective joint planning of education programmes for their pupils. A small number of schools provide opportunities for their pupils to return to school for part-time study in accordance with the DE EOTAS Guidance 2014/24.
- The breakfast, break-time and lunch sessions are used effectively to develop the social skills and positive dispositions of the pupils who engage well in social groups. The centre needs to develop individual therapeutic programmes, based on the needs of each pupil, with strategies to manage their emotions, behaviours and build their confidence. The pupils, as part of the Prince's Trust personal development course, have developed and decorated a quiet, relaxing 'time-out' area within the centre, however, another a more appropriate room needs to be provided by management for the significant numbers of pupils with social and anxiety difficulties.

- Management, through their positive behaviour policy, have recognised appropriately the need for a more structured reward system to encourage good behaviour, engagement in learning and to raise self-esteem. The mentoring system is developing, and the working relationships between staff and pupils are very positive with mutual respect and understanding.
- The staff are developing effective systems to plan, monitor and analyse pupil progress. Social and emotional baseline assessments are completed for the pupils and the information is analysed to inform the teacher's plans to develop the pupils' social skills and strategies for learning. In addition, baseline assessments in mathematics, English and ICT are used by subject teachers to identify appropriately individual accreditation routes and to plan lessons.
- All of the teaching observed was good or better, and is provided for the pupils on a small group or one to one basis. In the practice observed, planning for learning was detailed and there was effective monitoring of individual pupil progress. ICT was used effectively to support the learning in almost all of the lessons observed. Lessons are interesting and almost all of the pupils are fully engaged in the learning. The staff have appropriately high expectations of the pupils and instil in them the confidence to persevere with the work and to succeed.
- Planning, preparation and tracking progress in teaching English, mathematics, history, careers, the Prince's Trust work ranges from good to outstanding. There are examples of highly effective teaching approaches which enable the learners to overcome their learning difficulties and make very good progress.
- Teaching input from the Verbal Arts Centre, making very good use of short stories and poetry, leads to pupil discussions which display high levels of empathy and emotional insight to sensitive issues.
- Staff make the most of the accommodation available, however the rooms within the centre originally designed as classrooms are used by other services as offices. As a consequence three or more different groups are taught in one room by different teachers at the same time. There is an urgent need for the EA management to review the accommodation and to provide two further classrooms to provide adequately for the numbers of the pupils.
- The staff work hard to develop within the centre an ethos of calmness alongside high expectations that enables the pupils to engage and to focus well on their work. The supportive environment is clearly focused on preparation for the transition when pupils leave the centre. The staff meet each morning and evening to review pupil's social, emotional and academic progress.
- Discussions between teachers and pupils help the young people to identify their personal skills and capabilities to underpin career progression. There is a well-planned careers education information advice and guidance programme. Those pupils who have specific interests and aspirations are supported and effectively mentored to identify and plan for their progression pathways.

- Based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the centre's approach to the care and welfare of the pupils has a positive impact on learning, teaching and outcomes. The working relationships within the centre are very constructive and the staff have high expectations of the pupils. Risk management plans for pupils are in place when required. The EA provides the free schools meals service to the centre. Management have successfully implemented a strict no smoking policy on the centre campus, they need to consider how to put in place a programme to encourage pupils to develop further a fit and healthy lifestyle.

## **7. Leadership and management**

- The senior management for EOTAS within the EA is in transition and there is an advisory officer currently in a temporary management role supporting the centre's senior teacher. The senior management need to review the staffing in the centre in order to provide the range of skills and expertise with permanent teachers to provide consistent support to meet the needs of the pupils. The senior teacher manages well the running of the centre and is highly effective in supporting staff and pupils. He is highly organised and has in place effective systems to underpin the curriculum and enable staff to plan effectively to meet the needs of the pupils.
- The management have carried out a thorough self-evaluation of the provision and have identified clear priorities for improvement with specific targets and actions. The staff collaborate regularly, plan effectively and review the pupils' educational, and social and behavioural programmes. The management have identified appropriately the need to develop further the mentoring and assessment systems to monitor more effectively pupils' progress.
- Specialist teachers provide effective leadership for others who teach in the same subject area. Given some outstanding examples of teaching approaches being adopted there would be an advantage in arranging for opportunities for observation and purposeful reflective practice.
- The centre is governed by officers from the EA. Based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection the parents and staff can have limited confidence in the aspects of governance evaluated. The Education Authority should consider how to facilitate greater involvement of the local community, the referring schools and parents in supporting the work of the centre with representation on a local governance group for the centre.

## **8. Safeguarding**

- Based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the arrangements for safeguarding pupils reflect 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 report that they can discuss any concerns with staff with whom they have positive working relationships.

## **9. Overall Effectiveness**

Strabane EOTAS has a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor how the centre sustains improvement.

**Accommodation**

1. The teaching accommodation is inadequate in relation to the numbers of pupils and their needs. Whilst staff are working hard to use the accommodation effectively there are too few rooms available to provide for the numbers of pupils in the centre.
2. The senior management in the EA need to consider how to use the accommodation more effectively to facilitate learning and teaching and how office staff could be relocated to enable EOTAS staff to again use the teaching rooms currently used as offices.

**Statistical data**

STRABANE EOTAS	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Enrolment	7	12	12
Enrolment outreach	N/A	N/A	N/A
% Attendance	84%	84%	84%
% FSME <sup>1</sup>	100%	100%	100%

**Source:** data as held by the organisation.  
N/A not available



### **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 observed learning and teaching, scrutinised documentation and the pupils' written work and held formal and informal discussions with the pupils individually and in a group, with teachers and with staff with specific responsibilities.

The arrangements for this inspection included a meeting with a representative from the governance group and the opportunity for all parents, referring schools, 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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