

Long Tower Education Other Than At School (EOTAS) Centre, County Londonderry

Report of a Follow-up Inspection (Involving Action Short of Strike) in May 2023



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Second Follow-up Inspection to Long Tower Education Other Than At School (EOTAS) Centre, County Londonderry, BT48 6PB

Introduction

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) conducted an inspection of Long Tower EOTAS centre in [September 2015](#) as part of the inspection of the Foyle EOTAS service. A follow-up inspection in [May 2017](#), was impacted by industrial action short of strike by the teaching unions, which identified areas for improvement as detailed in the report. This second follow-up inspection was carried out in May 2023 and was also impacted by action short of strike. Prior to the inspection, the centre informed ETI that some of the staff would co-operate with the inspection in relation to elements of the arrangements for safeguarding pupils only. No observations of learning and teaching were permitted.

The ETI has a statutory duty to monitor, inspect and report on the quality of education being provided for pupils and young people. The inspection proceeded on a partial basis, as outlined above, and the key findings are based on evidence made available at the time of the inspection visit. Inspectors were unable to evaluate fully the safeguarding arrangements, and teachers did not facilitate observation of lessons by the inspectors.

Key actions and changes

Key actions or changes which affect the work of the centre since the initial inspection include the:

- provision for EOTAS in the Foyle area has changed since the previous follow-up inspection, resulting in the provision in Long Tower EOTAS Centre being inspected as a standalone provision;
- an Education Authority (EA) strategic lead and an advisor for Key Stage (KS) 4 EOTAS are in post eighteen months and communicate regularly with the centre manager;
- a strategic regional EOTAS centre development plan has been devised and is in the final year of a three-year cycle;
- a new data management system is in place across all KS 4 EOTAS centres and requires the centre manager at Long Tower EOTAS to share a monthly report with the EA advisor and strategic lead. The report includes information on attendance, assessments, behaviour and child protection;

- the centre manager has assumed direct line management responsibility for two youth workers, who were previously under the management of the EA Youth Service; and
- staff have been provided with professional learning to develop their knowledge and understanding of safeguarding issues on the themes of: anxiety-based school refusal; child sexual exploitation; the Operation Encompass Scheme relating to domestic violence; first aid training; and Team Teach strategies for positive behaviour management.

Views of staff and referring schools

A small number of parents/carers, teaching and support staff and referring schools responded to the confidential online questionnaires. The responses emphasised: the effective communication prior to placement; the quality of the support provided; the good relationships between the centre staff and the pupils; and the support of the staff for the care, dignity and wellbeing of the pupils attending Long Tower EOTAS. The ETI intends to re-issue the questionnaires at the time of the next inspection visit to complete this follow-up inspection.

Key findings in relation to Safeguarding

- Attendance for the pupils in Year 12 in 2021/22 was very good with almost all of them having over 90% attendance. The centre data for the current pupil cohort (2022/23) shows all 14 pupils have improved attendance since starting at the EOTAS centre.
- The monthly data submitted by the centre manager is used well to inform the strategic work of the centre, such as the focus on improving attendance and the provision of one-to-one mentoring to support pupil progression across subject areas. The centre staff are employing a number of strategies to try to re-engage the pupils and improve attendance such as: daily parental communication; Education Welfare Service referral or involvement; flexible timetable arrangements for a small number of pupils which are monitored and reviewed closely; multi-agency support team meetings with schools; home visits; and staff training on attachment and trauma awareness.
- The pupils reported that they enjoy the breakfast and nurture sessions and prefer smaller classes, which enables more discussion work and one-to-one support. They discussed the subjects they study both in the centre and at the local regional college and they have clear career aspirations for the future.
- Educational Psychology support is available to the centre to support the assessment of pupil need. No time has been allocated to provide individual and group work support to pupils or to advise centre staff on interventions and strategies in relation to anxiety-based school refusal which would be particularly useful to staff.

- Regional EA EOTAS centre policies relating to safeguarding, including child protection, have been devised but need to be developed further to personalise them to the procedures of the Long Tower EOTAS centre. An appropriate cycle for policy review is in place. The leadership have identified the need to further review and improve the procedures for individual risk assessments by detailing clear actions to manage and minimise risk.
- Since the original inspection in September 2015, the accommodation issues relating to the use of a public youth centre as an educational centre have not been addressed. The centre has limited indoor space to deliver effectively a therapeutic curriculum or provide break-out spaces for the pupils. There is no secretarial support, phone-line and the visual intercom system is not working, with the result that the centre manager cannot see who requires access to the building. There is limited outdoor space to provide horticulture and recreational activities, with physical education being delivered indoors. The accommodation has not been designed as a high-quality education centre that facilitates the supervision and education of young people experiencing complex issues.
- Due to the partial nature of the evidence base, the ETI is unable to evaluate the arrangements for safeguarding pupils. The pupils with whom ETI met reported that they feel safe in the centre and know who to speak to if they have any concerns about their safety or wellbeing. The pupils spoke positively about the help and support they receive from staff.
- Currently, the EA management provides the governance scrutiny and challenge function. Assurance for the arrangements for the independent scrutiny of safeguarding and governance within Long Tower EOTAS centre is needed.

Overall effectiveness

Due to the action short of strike by the teaching unions, the ETI was unable to evaluate the efficacy of the centre's arrangements for safeguarding young people and the centre's progress in effecting the required improvements in the quality of its provision since the original inspection in 2015.

The centre's second follow-up inspection is incomplete. The district inspector will continue to monitor the centre's progress and the follow-up inspection will be completed at the request of the centre, up to and including June 2023. Subsequently, the inspection will be completed without further notice.

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