

EDUCATION AND TRAINING
INSPECTORATE

EDUCATION OTHER THAN AT SCHOOL INSPECTION

Long Tower EOTAS Centre, Londonderry

Report of a Follow-up Inspection in November 2024

Follow-up to the Inspection of Long Tower EOTAS Centre, Londonderry, BT48 6PB

Introduction

Long Tower Education Other Than at School (EOTAS) Centre provides for key stage (KS) 4 pupils with complex needs, including social, behavioural and emotional wellbeing needs. The centre works in collaboration with the pupils' mainstream schools and the local further education college. The centre's vision is to nurture, inspire and empower young people through high expectations within a pupil-centred culture of inclusion.

Views of staff, parents/carers and referring schools

The centre staff, a small number of the staff from the referring schools and parents/carers responded to the online confidential questionnaires. The responses indicated their appreciation of the work of the centre and the support given to the pupils. Any issues raised were shared with the centre leader and an advisory officer from the Education Authority's (EA) Post-Primary Behaviour and Support Provisions Service.

Key actions and changes

The key actions which affect the work of the EOTAS centre are set out below.

The centre has received external support from the EA in relation to the:

- provision of a wide range of staff professional learning;
- use of data to evaluate robustly pupil outcomes and to inform learning and teaching;
- development and review of the effectiveness of the curriculum;
- piloting of a programme facilitated by youth workers in local post-primary schools to support pupils at risk from disengaging from their learning;
- ongoing review of the accommodation arrangements for the EOTAS service; and
- safeguarding governance arrangements.

Key findings

- Long Tower EOTAS Centre achieves its vision to nurture, inspire and empower young people through high expectations within a pupil-centred culture of inclusion, especially through the opportunities for the pupils from differing communities to learn together through the centre's provision for shared education.

- The pupils spoke to us about how much they have benefited from their placement in the centre. They relish the quality of individual support, encouragement and strategies their teachers use to enable them to achieve well from their individual starting points. They appreciate the feedback and advice they receive from their teachers, access to quality resources and opportunities for outdoor learning. The pupils share their views readily with staff and they value attending their referring schools, where appropriate, and the opportunity to attend courses at the further education college.
- The reviewed curriculum now ensures a range of appropriate pathways which are matched well to the pupils' needs, interests and aspirations. The holistic learning experiences include a strong focus on self-management and independent learning skills, vocational learning, physical education, sports, personal, social and emotional development, including relationships and sexuality education, to equip them better for life and work. The preventative curriculum is an important strength of the provision for the pupils.
- The planning, teaching and assessment for successful learning are almost always effective. In the effective practice observed, the teachers' skilful questioning through fast-paced, interactive, creative learning activities enabled the pupils to provide precise extended responses. The pupils engaged well in their learning, with a sense of enjoyment through the positive and motivational interactions with their teachers. They listened effectively to each other and staff, to take responsibility for their own learning, and present their views confidently through independent and collaborative working. A key strength is how the pupils applied their learning in real-life contexts. The impact of this effective practice is how well the pupils are equipped to overcome challenges to their learning and progress appropriately to the next stage of learning, employment or training.
- There are notable improvements in the specialist provision for English, mathematics and information and communication technology including the teachers' high expectations for the standards the pupils attain, high-quality interactive resources to enable the pupils to improve and apply their communication and digital skills in work-related contexts, and to gain confidence in mathematical processes and language.
- The pupils access careers education, information, advice and guidance to plan appropriate career pathways through access to advice provided by the careers service of the Department for the Economy, vocational courses and work-related learning experiences. The pupils benefit from the strong focus on the development of their employability skills, including through practice interviews and researching how to improve their curriculum vitae. Notably, their aspirations are being raised.
- The staff analyse a wide range of qualitative and quantitative data, including standardised data, to monitor robustly pupil progress from their individual starting points and to inform planning and the pupils' targets. The centre's development plan is informed well by the self-evaluation of the pupils' progress to identify priorities for improvement. There is a strong emphasis on the impact of staff professional learning to meet the pupils' complex needs. It is appropriate that the centre has identified using the views of the pupils to better inform the planning of provision.

- The staff work collaboratively with referring schools, other EOTAS centres, the local further education college and external agencies to support the pupils and enrich their learning experiences. The senior leaders from referring schools who met with inspectors spoke positively about the impact of their partnership with the centre on whole-school approaches to supporting pupils at risk of disengaging in their learning.
- The staff work proactively and effectively to engage, motivate and support the pupils who enter the centre with low attendance to attain notable improvements in attendance and engagement. The centre needs better access to multi-agency support, including designated time from the EA's Educational Psychology Service to ensure that all of the pupils fulfil their full-time placements.

Area for action:

- the centre needs better access to multi-agency support to ensure that all of the pupils fulfil their full-time placement.

Child Protection

At the time of the inspection, the evidence provided by the centre demonstrates that the arrangements for child protection align to the current statutory guidance. The pupils report that they feel safe in the centre and know what to do if they have any concerns about their safety or wellbeing.

Conclusion


Long Tower EOTAS Centre is achieving its vision well to nurture, inspire and empower young people through high expectations within a pupil-centred culture of inclusion, especially through the opportunities for the pupils from differing communities to learn together through the centre's provision for shared education.

The ETI will work with the centre in addressing the area for action in this report. An element of effective practice has been identified from which others may learn, notably the impact of effective learning and teaching to enable the pupils to overcome challenges to their learning and progress appropriately to the next stage of learning, employment or training. No further follow-up inspection is required.

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