

EDUCATION AND TRAINING  
INSPECTORATE

## EDUCATION OTHER THAN AT SCHOOL INSPECTION

Newtownabbey EOTAS Centre, Newtownabbey,  
County Antrim

Report of a Follow-up Inspection in October 2024

# **Follow-up to the inspection of Newtownabbey Education Other Than At School (EOTAS) Centre, Newtownabbey, BT37 0LX**

## **Introduction**

Newtownabbey Education Other Than at School (EOTAS) centre is located in the Monkstown area of Newtownabbey. It provides a key stage (KS) 3 partnership programme for a small number of pupils, in collaboration with their mainstream schools. Since the last inspection, a behaviour support assistant has been appointed by the Education Authority (EA) and pupil enrolment is not yet at capacity. The EOTAS centre also provides outreach provision to local schools and, as part of this remit, is supporting a small number of year 8 pupils with the transition from primary to post-primary school.

## **Views of staff, parents/carers and referral schools**

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) issued confidential online questionnaires to parents, staff and referring schools in advance of the follow-up inspection. A small number of parents/carers and staff from the referring schools responded to the questionnaires. Almost all affirmed the work of the centre staff, and the support provided.

A small number of the centre's teaching and support staff responded to the questionnaire and were wholly positive about the professional learning they received in relation to: child protection and safeguarding; and the planning and review of the pupils' learning. A small number of written comments provided by the respondents were discussed with the centre leader and the EA.

The inspectors held discussions with a small number of pupils. The pupils reported that they benefitted from small group support which enabled them to focus on their learning. They spoke highly of the centre staff, the ongoing support they receive in their schools and that they were working on increasing the number of days they attend their mainstream school. All of the pupils reported that they felt safe and could speak to designated staff about any of their concerns.

## **Key actions and changes**

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

- The centre is participating in the EA's review of the KS 3 partnership programme. The senior teachers in KS3 EOTAS centres across the locality, meet monthly to assess and improve the consistency of outreach support and partnership provision.

- The centre provides a tiered level of outreach support which includes consultations and advice to staff working in mainstream schools and school-based professional learning.
- The centre staff have received further professional learning on wellbeing, nurture and trauma-informed practice.
- The curriculum now includes the development of life skills which is personalised to each pupil. Wellbeing support for pupils has been developed through the introduction of the 'daily mile' initiative and supportive weekly counselling sessions for individuals and groups provided by the EA.

## Key findings

- The planning for learning has been developed by staff to include a range of learning experiences which are aligned to each pupil's interests and which relate well to real-life contexts, such as planning a trip. There is a good focus on developing the pupils' social skills and there are opportunities for them to work together. The staff reflect on their practice and use their observations and knowledge of the pupils to inform their future planning. In the most effective practice, staff use assessments effectively to identify what the pupils know and can do and plan well for individual learning.
- All of the lessons observed during the inspection were effective in promoting learning; the most effective lessons had a range of appropriate activities and good pace and challenge which maintained the pupils' interests and kept them engaged. The relationships between staff and pupils, and between the pupils and their peers, are supportive and friendly.
- The staff are developing processes for self-evaluation to monitor the effectiveness of the outreach support provided. Feedback from the referring schools indicates that they value the outreach support provided by the centre. In particular, a community of learning is emerging, with centre staff upskilling school staff in relation to behaviour management. The centre should continue to develop further the processes for self-evaluation to monitor the effectiveness of the support provided, to include an analysis of the number of pupils who require further outreach support or EOTAS centre provision at KS 4.
- The pupils are benefitting from the professional development of staff. They are now more engaged in the learning process and are able to manage better their emotions. The teachers in the referring schools also report that their relationships with the pupils have improved.
- The staff have a very clear understanding of the strengths and interests of the pupils and the issues and challenges the pupils face; the centre prioritises the wellbeing of every pupil as the foundation for learning and development.

- The curriculum includes well-planned therapeutic learning opportunities and activities to help the pupils manage their own behaviour and wellbeing. A welcoming morning session with breakfast and other activities such as board games and discussion, supports well the pupils' readiness for their day's learning and impacts positively on the development of their independence, confidence and life skills.
- A range of appropriate programmes have been implemented to support the pupils in managing their behaviour and developing their self-esteem and resilience; including the centre's 'First Real Experiences Start Here' (FRESH) programme which supports pupils to manage their behaviour and emotions through activities such as golf, in addition to opportunities for educational visits.
- A schedule of review for safeguarding policies is maintained annually and policies are updated in line with the Department of Education's circulars. Risk assessments are completed on a weekly basis to reflect better the social and emotional wellbeing needs of the pupils. The child protection policy includes the centre's participation in the Operation Encompass Scheme and importantly there is a clear code of conduct for staff, which includes the use of social media.

Area for consideration:

- to develop further the processes for self-evaluation to monitor the effectiveness of the support provided.

## Child Protection

At the time of the inspection, the evidence provided by the EOTAS centre demonstrates that the arrangements for child protection align to the current statutory guidance.

## Going Forward


Newtownabbey EOTAS centre has developed and improved the KS 3 provision and outreach service to support more effectively the pupils and their referring schools. It is timely that the centre development plan is being finalised to build on the improvement work, create a shared vision for the centre and support further the development of the processes for planning and self-evaluation.

ETI will continue to monitor the progress of Newtownabbey EOTAS in addressing the area for consideration as laid out in this report. No further follow-up inspection is required.

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