

# YOUTH INSPECTION



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

John Paul II Youth Club,  
Belfast

Report of an Inspection  
in April 2010

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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%

In assessing the various features of the provision, Inspectors relate their evaluations to six descriptors as set out below:

DESCRIPTOR
Outstanding
Very Good
Good
Satisfactory
Inadequate
Unsatisfactory

## 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 John Paul II Youth Club (the centre) is a voluntary centre, in the Ardoyne area of North Belfast within the Belfast Education and Library Board (BELB). The centre was established in 1972 by a group of dedicated volunteers, all of whom were women; the work of the centre has continued to be developed under the previous and the current leadership. The centre achieved full-time status in 1978 with the appointment of an unqualified full-time youth worker, who completed his professional qualification in 1981.

1.2 According to figures provided by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) the centre is located within one of the most deprived areas in Northern Ireland. The figures provided by the organisation indicate that the current membership of the centre is 487, which represents two-thirds of the young people living in the immediate area who are under 16 years of age.

**Table 1: Total membership over the past four years**

Total membership over last four years	M 4-9 yrs	F 4-9 yrs	M 10-15 yrs	F 10-15 yrs	M 16-18 yrs	F 16-18 yrs	M 19+ yrs	F 19+ yrs	Total
2006/07	120	85	224	171	39	36	18	10	703
2007/08	125	97	110	121	23	10	18	4	508
2008/09	108	74	89	68	39	25	15	8	426
Current membership	115	97	110	121	15	10	16	3	487

1.3 The total membership enrolls each year during July to take advantage of the summer provision but do not attend regularly throughout the year. Over the last four years this total has decreased, with a significant reduction between 2006/07 and 2007/08. The organisation provides minimal analysis of these figures as part of its self-evaluation. Two-thirds of the members are under 15 years of age. The staff provide a suitable programme for this age group responding to their demands and needs with single-sex and mixed activities. Only one-half of those young people between 16-18 years of age enrolled in 2009/10 compared to the previous year. The full-time youth worker attributes this decrease in membership to the recent closure of the centre for three months, due to renovations. During this time, the staff provided activities for the members using local sport and swimming facilities. It is unacceptable that a youth centre is closed for this length of time with limited alternative provision.

1.4 The average nightly attendance of 70 young people reflects the attendance during the ten months from September to June. Even though the centre was closed, nightly attendance figures have increased and meet the BELB's expectations for a full-time youth centre.

1.5 The centre has retained one-third of its current membership over a period of six years, which is a significant achievement. It also maintains a record of the number of young people who participate in the range of programmes each year.

1.6 The full-time youth worker needs to make better use of this data to demonstrate the effectiveness of the youth provision and to benchmark the expected outcomes for those young people who attend over a longer period of time.

1.7 The centre is staffed by one full-time youth worker, one youth support worker, three assistant youth support workers, 13 volunteers, and three Training for Success (TfS) trainees. The centre operates on three afternoons, and is attended largely by the children from the local boys' primary school. It is also open five evenings each week, offering a good range of age-appropriate programmes and activities. Additional activities take place at the week-end, including competitive football, a gardening project, and residential visits.

## **2. EVIDENCE BASE**

2.1 The inspection took place in two stages because of the renovation programme. The inspection team held discussions with the management committee and the full-time youth worker, and observed out of centre activities in April and returned in June to complete the inspection. The team observed youth work practice during the after-school and evening programmes and held discussions with the staff and ten parents. A range of documentation was examined including annual reports, programme evaluations and the full-time youth worker's evidence file. Discussions also took place with 15 young people on the arrangements for pastoral care and child protection, and on the quality of services provided for them.

## **3. CHILD PROTECTION**

3.1 The centre has very good comprehensive arrangements in place for the safeguarding of children and young people. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education (DE). All of the staff employed by the youth centre have received child protection training in the past twelve months. The centre informs parents about the procedures for child protection on an annual basis. All policies are clearly displayed on the notice-boards.

## **4. PASTORAL CARE**

4.1 The quality of pastoral care is very good. The staff provide a strong caring ethos and the young people spoke positively about the advice and support they receive from the youth workers. They reported that they felt safe and secure during the programmes provided for them, and are aware of what to do if they have any worries about their safety, care and well-being. The views of the young people are taken into consideration through discussions and at the end of programme evaluations. The mutual respect between the staff and the young people is reflected through the good working relationships and the promotion and maintaining of positive behaviour. The safeguarding messages displayed around the centre are actively promoted through the programmes and other activities.

## **5. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

5.1 The management committee, two of whom were former full-time youth workers in the centre, demonstrates a commitment to quality improvement at all levels. They implement strategic objectives to develop and resource the centre, to promote an inclusive ethos, and to provide a relevant programme in response to the identified needs of the young people. Members of the management committee visit the centre regularly and provide practical support to develop and sustain the programmes. The committee provides effective governance and good financial management. They meet monthly and evaluate the full-time youth worker's reports and other relevant documentation. The Area Youth Officer also attends these meetings, provides advice on the development of the programme and offers support to the full-time youth worker.

5.2 The full-time youth worker is from the local community and has a very good understanding of the needs of the young people. The relevant programmes reflect clearly the aims of 'Youth Work: A Model for Effective Practice' and the themes of the BELB youth service; they promote the young people's confidence, educational achievement and employability. There are beneficial links with a range of external agencies, which include other youth providers, community organisations and local schools.

5.3 The staff have relevant expertise; they are enthusiastic and deployed well to provide relevant activities and issue-based group work, which engage the young people well, and meet their interests and the needs of the community. The full-time youth worker demonstrates good leadership through her effective support for the staff in short-term planning and in evaluating their individual youth work programmes. The staff demonstrate a good understanding of the planning process and are clear about the learning outcomes which they set and share with the young people. They maintain evidence files on the outcomes for the young people, including the young people's evaluation. The staff, however, need to be more evaluative in assessing the achievements and the outcomes for the young people, and in relation to their previous achievements over time. The youth worker promotes improvement through relevant in-house training and the accredited courses available through the BELB youth service.

5.4 The very good level of the young people's involvement in leadership roles, including senior members, junior leaders and volunteers, is a significant feature of the centre. These young people are encouraged and supported to achieve appropriate leadership status, and they make a valuable contribution to the centre's programme and, in particular, to the summer provision. They demonstrate a clear commitment to volunteering within the centre and recognise the benefit for their own community and for their own sense of achievement and self-worth. Six of these young people are members of the youth advisory panel who attend the management committee meetings to represent the members' views and to support the committee.

## **6. QUALITY OF PROVISION**

6.1 The centre has established good working relationships with the local residents, including parents and other adults, many of whom are past members. The youth workers make good use of the outdoor area to extend the range of activities including out-door games and gardening. The members participating in the well planned gardening project have developed relevant knowledge and skills, and have learnt to work well together as a team. They have also learnt to take responsibility for their specific tasks and have enjoyed growing their own vegetables. The full-time youth worker makes good use of additional educational material to reinforce their learning and to promote a healthy lifestyle.

6.2 The young people are involved in the planning of the programmes and are supported well to evaluate their own learning at the end of each session. The youth advisory panel is effective and consults with members on important aspects of the centre, including buying equipment, the design and layout of the building and assessing the members' level of satisfaction with the overall programme.

6.3 The quality of the youth work observed was consistently good. The youth workers engage well with the young people and, in almost all instances, use the resources effectively to provide relevant and participative programmes. The centre needs to review the use and suitability of information and communication technology (ICT) to provide youth work programmes. The staff require training to use ICT more effectively in assisting the young people's learning.

6.4 The well-balanced provision offers a range of recreational and educational programmes, including the 'anti-sectarianism in sport' programme, 'nil by mouth', drug and alcohol education, dance, drama, creative arts and international visits. The staff use the casual and activity-based sessions well to extend the young people's learning. The younger members participate well in the after-school programme in which they improve their communication skills, develop confidence and acquire new skills. Through the after-school programme, which reinforces the importance of doing one's best and celebrates the winner's achievement with the other members, the centre promotes and rewards positive behaviour and effort by awarding a 'Member of the Week' certificate. The full-time youth worker provides good support for members who experience difficulty in managing their own behaviour.

6.5 The full-time youth worker has identified the need to provide the young people with the opportunity to gain further qualifications to enhance their employability. She has been proactive in establishing effective partnerships with training providers, including Opportunity Youth and North City Training. During the inspection three young people, who had enrolled in the TfS programme, were completing their work-based placement in the centre. The trainees make a valuable contribution to the programme and are supported by the staff to develop their leadership skills and self-confidence. The training providers acknowledge the good quality of the structure and the ethos of the centre which promotes educational achievement and professionalism. They spoke highly of the support given to trainees whilst on placement. Pupils from three local post-primary schools also complete their work placements in the centre. These arrangements illustrate well the staff's genuine commitment to encouraging and supporting the young people to achieve further qualifications and to become economically active.

## **7. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS**

7.1 The young people participate regularly, respond well to the good range of relevant programmes and acquire new skills and knowledge. They learn how to work well in small groups, to support one another in achieving tasks and to negotiate roles and accept responsibilities. When members first join they learn the principles of group work and participation. Overtime they participate in a range of relevant programmes and engage more fully in the centre. To develop further their skills in areas such as sport, dance and drama, they have participated successfully in regional and national competitions and events. When the centre was closed recently, the young people participating in swimming classes organised in a nearby school developed their self-confidence, learned about water safety; some learned how to swim whilst others improved their own performance.

7.2 The young people are encouraged to express their views and opinions. During one session observed the staff facilitated well a group of young people to put forward their views on aspects of the programme. They demonstrated the ability to communicate clearly and to listen to the views of others, and to suggest solutions. The group of young people made good and confident use of role-play to illustrate their views and to solve the problem. The full-time youth worker used the opportunity to help the young people recognise and understand the difference between equality and equity. The centre uses this process of consultation well to plan the curriculum; the young people share their views appropriately and accept the responsibility to reach an agreed conclusion.

7.3 The young people are highly motivated and respond enthusiastically to the planned activities and courses organised by the centre and awarding bodies. A group of 12 young people participated in the 'Timewarp'<sup>1</sup> course which is specifically designed by Forward Learning<sup>2</sup> for 11 to 18 year olds and studies the history of conflict and cultural diversity in Ireland. The young people who participated in this programme developed their research skills, extended their knowledge of Irish history and raised their political awareness. Eight participants achieved the Youth Action Achievement Award (Bronze) which is accredited by City and Guilds and have continued to make good use of the skills they have developed to benefit other young people in the centre.

7.4 The centre uses its links with other youth providers effectively. It promotes active citizenship successfully through a range of relevant programmes including creative art projects with support from the BELB North Belfast Arts Initiative. These programmes explore local issues including the misuse of drugs and alcohol, and historical events. The young people represented their learning and a positive vision for their community in murals which they painted on the outside of the centre.

7.5 The centre makes good use of its links with the North Belfast Sports Forum and the Belfast Community Sports Development Network to promote active citizenship through sport. The young people who participated in these programmes met their peers from local communities, learnt new games and now feel confident to use the nearby leisure centre. A group of young women from the youth centre received the 'Fair Play' trophy on two occasions, from the North Belfast Sports Forum, in recognition of their participation and commitment to the programme. The majority of the young people who attended the centre during 2008/09 received recognition for their participation in programmes, which were well matched to their ability and interests. The centre and the local community recognise and celebrate the young people's achievements annually.

## 8. SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS

8.1 The strengths of the provision include:

- the effective governance provided by the management committee;
- the good leadership of the full-time youth worker, who has the confidence of the young people, the staff and the community;
- the young people's personal and social development including their positive behaviour which is well supported by the very good working relationships between the young people and the staff;
- the good quality and range of the learning experiences, which develop the young people's self-confidence, and promote active citizenship;
- the very good level of the young people's commitment and participation, including preparation for leadership roles; and
- the good standard of the young people's achievements which are celebrated and recognised within the local community.

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<sup>1</sup> TIMEWARP is an interactive trip into the real history of Ireland and how each community has played a part in shaping the future.

<sup>2</sup> Forward Learning is a not for profit charity company established to provide support, training and guidance in the fields of peace and reconciliation, ethnicity, community development and capacity building.



8.2 The area for improvement is the need:

- to develop a more strategic approach to monitoring and evaluating the progression and improvement in the outcomes for the young people.

## 9. **CONCLUSION**

9.1 The quality of the youth provision in John Paul II Youth Club is good. The centre has important strengths in most of its youth provision. The inspection has identified an area for improvement, which the centre has demonstrated the capacity to address. The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor the centre's progress on the area for improvement.

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