

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

DEIS EVALUATION

REPORT

School Name	Scoil Ursula
School Address	Blackrock Co Cork
Roll number	05940D

Date of Evaluation: 04-04-2017



WHAT IS A DEIS EVALUATION?

In 2005 the Department published *DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools): An Action Plan for Educational Inclusion*. The aim of this action plan is to ensure that the educational needs of children and young people from disadvantaged communities are met.

Schools are expected to develop action plans for improvement in the following areas (referred to as the DEIS themes): attendance; retention; progression; literacy; numeracy; at post-primary level, educational attainment including examination attainment; partnership with parents; partnership with other schools and educational providers, and with external agencies. The DEIS Evaluation model evaluates and reports on the school's action planning for improvement.

HOW TO READ THIS REPORT

During this inspection, the inspectors evaluated the school's action planning for improvement under the following headings:

1. DEIS action planning for improvement
2. DEIS themes

Inspectors describe the quality of each of these areas using the Inspectorate's quality continuum which is shown on the final page of this report. The quality continuum provides examples of the language used by inspectors when evaluating and describing the quality of the school's provision in each area.

DEIS Evaluation

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES

Date of inspection	04-04-2017
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discussion with principal and teachers• Examination of school's current action plans for improvement• Observation of DEIS-related activities and interventions• Pupil focus-group interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Parent focus-group interview• Analysis of parent and pupil questionnaires• Observation of teaching and learning• Examination of pupils' work• Interaction with pupils• Feedback to principal, teachers, chairperson of the board of management and the School Completion coordinator

SCHOOL CONTEXT

Scoil Ursula participates in Band I of DEIS. It has the services of a shared home school community liaison (HSCL) coordinator and participates in the School Completion Programme. At the time of the evaluation there were 163 pupils enrolled in the school.

The board of management was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report, and the response of the board will be found in the appendix of this report.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

The key findings in relation to the DEIS action planning for improvement process in this school are the following:

- The overall quality of DEIS action planning for improvement is good with the quality of target setting and intervention observed across each of the five themes ranging from satisfactory to very good.
- There is scope to extend the DEIS action planning for improvement process to include an explicit focus on pupils with the lowest attainment levels in literacy and numeracy.
- While whole-school targets have been established for improved pupil outcomes in each area, some scope for development in the target setting process was noted.
- A range of interventions and strategies are implemented in an effective manner and these are impacting positively on outcomes for the majority of pupils.
- The commitment of staff in effectively implementing strategies and interventions is commendable and they display a well-developed capacity to further develop the DEIS planning process.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Aspects of the DEIS action planning for improvement process that require development in this school include:

- The school should establish targets, intervention strategies and assessment approaches for identifiable groups of pupils with low levels of attainment in literacy and numeracy.
- DEIS targets should be expressed in terms of improvements to be achieved from a clearly established baseline of provision.
- The approaches and initiatives in use in particular areas of literacy and numeracy, which are not achieving the intended learning outcomes for some pupils should be reviewed.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. DEIS ACTION PLANNING IMPROVEMENT

- The overall quality of DEIS action planning for improvement is good with the quality of target setting and intervention observed across each of the five themes ranging from satisfactory to very good. Effective work has been undertaken by the principal and planning coordinators in leading DEIS action planning for improvement.
- Targets have been established for improved outcomes under each of the DEIS themes and there is evidence that this process has increased awareness of areas for improvement amongst parents, pupils and teachers. To further enhance the whole-school target setting process, it is recommended that targets be expressed in terms of improvements to be achieved from an established baseline of provision in the school. It is recommended also that the target-setting process be broadened to include targets, intervention strategies and assessment approaches for identifiable groups of pupils with low levels of attainment in literacy and numeracy.
- A range of approaches and initiatives linked to the DEIS targets is implemented across each of the five DEIS themes and there is evidence that they are impacting positively on learning outcomes for most pupils. The whole-school approach to implementing these initiatives is highly commendable. There is scope however, to review the approaches and initiatives in use in

particular areas of literacy and numeracy, which are not achieving the intended learning outcomes for some pupils.

- Standardised assessment scores in literacy and numeracy are monitored longitudinally. While teachers maintain a broad range of planning and assessment documentation on individual pupils, it is recommended that a single education plan be prepared for targeted pupils. This should facilitate all relevant personnel to work in a coordinated manner on agreed targets and strategies and engage in regular, collaborative reviews of progress. The development of a systematic approach to tracking, monitoring and recording the progress of the lowest attaining pupils requires specific attention.
- Confirmation was provided that the board of management has formally adopted the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-primary Schools (2011)* without modification and that the school is compliant with the requirements of the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (2011)*.

2. DEIS THEMES

2.1. Literacy and Numeracy

Literacy

- The quality of action planning for improvement in literacy is satisfactory. The school has engaged in an analysis of standardised tests results and teacher-designed tasks and tests to establish general levels of pupil attainment in this area. Parents were included in this process through the administration of questionnaires. The work completed in formulating an assessment tool to establish a baseline of pupil attainment in oral language is noteworthy.
- Informed by the assessment process and data analysis, the school established targets for improvements in pupil learning outcomes in literacy. These targets range from being very specific and impacting on classroom planning and practice to being general in nature and not impacting on practice. It was noted that some teachers were not clear on the criteria for success associated with some targets. It is recommended that the target setting process be further developed to ensure that all teachers clearly understand their role in contributing to the achievement of whole-school improvement targets. It is also recommended that specific targets be established for the lowest attaining groups of pupils in literacy.
- A good range of initiatives has been implemented to enhance pupils' attainment in literacy. These include *Reading Recovery*, *First Steps* and *Literacy Lift Off*. These initiatives are generally well implemented in classrooms and there is clear evidence of improved pupil learning outcomes in the *Reading Recovery* and *Literacy Lift Off* programmes in particular. The impact of the *First Steps Writing* programme is clearly in evidence in the whole-school approach to the development of writing genres. However, further implementation of both the summative and formative assessment components of this programme is recommended. The school successfully engaged in the *Happy Talk* initiative aimed at supporting and enhancing pupils' language learning and development. Commendable work has been completed on formulating a discrete oral language programme which focuses primarily on vocabulary extension and developing an awareness and understanding of the parts of speech. It is recommended that this good work be further developed by incorporating the new *Primary Languages Curriculum* into this process and providing opportunities for pupils to develop their language skills in meaningful contexts.

Numeracy

- The overall quality of action planning for improvement in numeracy is satisfactory. In accordance with the approach taken to literacy planning, school assessment data and parental and pupil perspectives were considered when identifying areas for improvement in Mathematics.
- A whole-school target has been established to provide additional support for all pupils who have been identified as having below average attainment in Mathematics. The school also has a target to encourage greater parental involvement in their children's mathematical development. It is recommended that the target-setting process for numeracy be informed by a greater analysis of the available assessment data in the school, with particular reference to pupil learning outcomes in both skills and strand content areas of the mathematics curriculum. It is further recommended that specific targets be included for identifiable groups of pupil with very low attainment levels in Mathematics.
- Number operations, with a particular emphasis on tables, have been identified as the primary whole-school focus area in Mathematics and a broad range of approaches is implemented successfully.
- The school implements team teaching approaches in Mathematics in the middle and senior classrooms. This involves grouping pupils for small group tuition based on their attainment in mathematics assessment tests. While there is preliminary data to indicate that this is having a positive impact on pupil learning outcomes, it is recommended that the school closely monitors and evaluates the ongoing impact of this practice on both pupil's attitudes and on their attainment levels in the subject.
- Teachers have engaged in a variety of continuous professional development courses in Mathematics. To further develop the school's capacity to meet the needs of pupils' experiencing significant difficulties, it is recommended that the possibility of engaging in training on evidence informed initiatives such as *Maths Recovery* be explored.

2.2. Attendance, Retention, Progression

- The overall quality of action planning for improvement in the areas of attendance retention and progression is good. The level of attendance in the school compares very favourably with the available data for attendance in DEIS schools. Targets have been established to improve attendance and punctuality in the school. A clear group of pupils with low attendance has been identified for support.
- Pupil attendance is recorded electronically and very high quality attendance records are available. The school in general, and HSCL in particular, have established very positive relationships with parents. Effective monitoring and support for pupils and families experiencing difficulties with attendance are in place. All pupils who achieve full attendance are acknowledged and rewarded at the end of each term.
- The school reports full retention of pupils in education up to sixth class and all pupils transfer to post-primary education. The highly-effective role played by the HSCL coordinator and SCP worker in this regard is acknowledged.
- A wide variety of well-structured and positive supports is delivered to targeted pupils through the *School Completion Programme*. This support includes incentives and rewards for improved school attendance. The effective work undertaken in supporting pupils with homework and on the development of pupils' cooperative and interpersonal skills was also noted in this context.
- Responses to questionnaires issued indicate that there is high level of awareness among parents and pupils in relation to attendance. A majority of pupils acknowledge that rewards are in place for attending school and almost all parents indicate that their child goes to school most days. To further develop the effective practice in this area of action planning, consideration should be given

to broadening the range of initiatives in place such as highlighting attendance on classroom and school displays and acknowledging improved attendance in addition to full attendance.

2.3. Partnership with parents and others

- The overall quality of the DEIS action planning for partnership with parents ranges from good to very good. Targets have been established for enhanced parental involvement in courses, classroom activities, class meetings and parent-teacher meetings. Including parents in policy making in the school is also included in the target-setting process.
- The HSCL coordinator, in conjunction with the classroom teachers, organises class meetings for all parents on an annual basis. Training and support is also provided for parents in approaches to supporting their children's learning in literacy and numeracy. Workshops focusing on children's learning styles and assisting in homework were particularly positive features of provision. Very positive examples of parents' work on initiatives such as *Maths for Fun* were observed and high levels of parental participation are recorded in the *One Book One Community* initiative.
- In the course of a focus-group interview, parents expressed very high levels of satisfaction with the school. They highlighted the quality of their relationship with the HSCL, the welcoming atmosphere, the openness to parental involvement and the levels support their children receive as positive features of their experience in the school. The personal and social development opportunities and experiences that have been a feature of their participation in school-based courses were also emphasised.
- While the school does not have specific targets established for partnership with other agencies, evidence from both parents and school management indicates that strategic partnerships have been established with a variety of relevant local statutory and voluntary organisations.

THE INSPECTORATE'S QUALITY CONTINUUM

Inspectors describe the quality of provision in the school using the Inspectorate's quality continuum which is shown below. The quality continuum provides examples of the language used by inspectors when evaluating and describing the quality the school's provision of each area.

Level	Description	Example of descriptive terms
Very Good	Very good applies where the quality of the areas evaluated is of a very high standard. The very few areas for improvement that exist do not significantly impact on the overall quality of provision. For some schools in this category the quality of what is evaluated is outstanding and provides an example for other schools of exceptionally high standards of provision.	Very good; of a very high quality; very effective practice; highly commendable; very successful; few areas for improvement; notable; of a very high standard. Excellent; outstanding; exceptionally high standard, with very significant strengths; exemplary
Good	Good applies where the strengths in the areas evaluated clearly outweigh the areas in need of improvement. The areas requiring improvement impact on the quality of pupils'/students' learning. The school needs to build on its strengths and take action to address the areas identified as requiring improvement in order to achieve a <i>very good</i> standard.	Good; good quality; valuable; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; some areas for improvement
Satisfactory	Satisfactory applies where the quality of provision is adequate. The strengths in what is being evaluated just outweigh the shortcomings. While the shortcomings do not have a significant negative impact they constrain the quality of the learning experiences and should be addressed in order to achieve a better standard.	Satisfactory; adequate; appropriate provision although some possibilities for improvement exist; acceptable level of quality; improvement needed in some areas
Fair	Fair applies where, although there are some strengths in the areas evaluated, deficiencies or shortcomings that outweigh those strengths also exist. The school will have to address certain deficiencies without delay in order to ensure that provision is satisfactory or better.	Fair; evident weaknesses that are impacting on pupils'/students' learning; less than satisfactory; experiencing difficulty; must improve in specified areas; action required to improve
Weak	Weak applies where there are serious deficiencies in the areas evaluated. Immediate and coordinated whole-school action is required to address the areas of concern. In some cases, the intervention of other agencies may be required to support improvements.	Weak; unsatisfactory; insufficient; ineffective; poor; requiring significant change, development or improvement; experiencing significant difficulties;

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 1 Observations on the content of the inspection report

The BOM acknowledges the positive findings outlined in the report which affirms the commitment, expertise and dedication of the school staff and the entire school community.

The BOM accepts this report and will encourage and support all school stakeholders in the implementation of the suggested recommendations.

Area 2 Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection.

The BOM acknowledges and accepts the recommendations for improvement as laid out in the DEIS evaluation Report.

The school continues to identify the pupils with lower attainment levels in literacy and numeracy and will establish targets, intervention strategies and assessment approaches to ensure that appropriate progress is being made in these areas by those pupils.

In line with the recommendations, a review of the approaches and initiatives in use in literacy and numeracy has already been undertaken resulting in one teacher now enrolled in the Maths Recovery course and alternative curricula being researched for use with lower attainers.

The Board, in line with its true Ursuline ethos, will continue to challenge and support each child to reach his/her potential in a positive, inclusive and caring atmosphere.