

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

DEIS EVALUATION

REPORT

School Name	Sacred Heart Primary N.S.
School Address	Granard Co Longford
Roll number	20101R

Date of Evaluation: 17-10-2018



DEIS EVALUATION

In 2017, the Department published the DEIS (*Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools*) Plan. The aim of this plan is to ensure better educational outcomes for learners in schools from disadvantaged communities and to maximise the chances of every child getting the best possible opportunity to fulfil her/his potential in life.

Schools are expected to develop action plans for improvement in the following areas (referred to as the DEIS themes): attendance; retention; transitions; literacy; numeracy; partnership with parents; partnership with other schools and educational providers, and with external agencies. Post-primary schools are also expected to develop action plans for improvement in examination attainment.

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.

The board of management was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report; a response was not received from the board.

CHILD PROTECTION

During the inspection visit, the following checks in relation to the school's child protection procedures were conducted:

1. The name of the DLP and the Child Safeguarding Statement are prominently displayed near the main entrance to the school.
2. The Child Safeguarding Statement has been ratified by the board and includes an annual review and a risk assessment.
3. All teachers visited reported that they have read the Child Safeguarding Statement and that they are aware of their responsibilities as mandated persons.
4. The Child Safeguarding Statement meets the requirements of the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017.
5. The records of the last three board of management meetings record a child protection oversight report that meet the requirements of the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary schools 2017.
6. The board of management has ensured that arrangements are in place to provide information to all school personnel on the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools, 2017
7. School planning documentation indicates that the school is making full provision for the relevant aspects of the curriculum (SPHE, Stay Safe, RSE, Wellbeing).
8. Child protection records are maintained in a secure location.

The school met the requirements in relation to each of the checks above.

DEIS Evaluation

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES

Dates of inspection	15-17 October 2018
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Interview with principal and relevant staff• Examination of school's current action plans for improvement• Observation of DEIS-related activities and interventions	<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 and relevant staff

SCHOOL CONTEXT

Sacred Heart NS Granard participates in Band I of the DEIS action plan. 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 159 pupils enrolled in the school. Enrolment patterns have remained relatively stable in the school over the past few years. The current three-year DEIS plan was devised for the period 2017-2020.

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 school is a welcoming place for parents and pupils and provides a stimulating, attractive and comfortable indoor and outdoor learning environment.
- The quality of DEIS action planning for improvement is satisfactory.
- A wide range of high quality literacy and numeracy initiatives is in place in the school and the whole staff is highly dedicated to their implementation.
- Many of the initiatives are not currently driven by specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, time-bound (SMART) targets in the DEIS plan.
- The school has amassed large amounts of useful data which should be used more effectively to inform target-setting and monitor progress.
- There is scope to communicate further with parents about their children's learning.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

- In reviewing its DEIS action planning for improvement, the school should focus on setting targets that are specific, measurable and time-bound for various cohorts of pupils at a whole-school level particularly in literacy, numeracy and attendance, and on selecting precise strategies that will achieve those targets.
- Target setting for each of the DEIS themes at whole-school level should be based on an analysis of the data that is already available in the school.
- The school is advised to communicate further with parents about their children's learning.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. DEIS ACTION PLANNING FOR IMPROVEMENT

- The overall quality of leadership of DEIS action planning for improvement is satisfactory. The school has a core DEIS team in place and its individual members are highly committed to coordinating the various aspects of DEIS. While the team has worked conscientiously on DEIS planning for several years, there is confusion in the action plans between targets and strategies and there is considerable repetition in the plans from one three-year cycle to the next. This makes it difficult to monitor the effectiveness of the DEIS action planning for improvement process in any consistent way.
- A wide range of good quality initiatives is in place in the school and the whole staff is highly dedicated to their implementation. However, many of these initiatives are not currently driven by specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, time-bound (SMART) targets in the DEIS plan. The impact of this work would be much more focused and could later be readily monitored and evaluated if the DEIS targets were stated in measurable terms.
- The school has amassed large amounts of useful data and, as is good practice, most interventions are pre and post tested. The school should use this data, together with a closer analysis of its standardised test data, to identify priority areas for improvement. Clearly identifying these priority areas will help to coordinate the whole-school effort. Using the six-step school self-evaluation process will help the school to focus on priority areas for improvement, set targets that are specific, measurable and time-bound for various cohorts of pupils across the school, and to select particular strategies that will achieve those targets. Future target setting should build incrementally on previous improvements.
- The school is very well resourced. The school community is to be commended on the creation of a welcoming, stimulating, attractive and comfortable indoor and outdoor learning environment with striking seasonal displays for the pupils and their parents.
- The teachers engage in a range of continuous professional development courses to enhance the promotion of pupil wellbeing in the school, and a variety of programmes is used including Fun Friends, Incredible Years and mindfulness.

2. DEIS THEMES

2.1 Literacy and Numeracy

Literacy

- The quality of planning for literacy is satisfactory. The school's literacy plan sets out to target the improved attainment of one cohort of pupils performing below the 16th percentile in English reading in the standardised tests. Further measurable targets need to be devised for other cohorts of pupils on a whole-school basis and should also address other aspects of literacy including oral language and writing.

- The school implements a range of literacy interventions and does so very effectively. These include First Steps, Literacy Hour and Power Hour which operate at various times throughout the year, while pupils with additional needs receive support on a withdrawal or in-class basis. All interventions are assessed before and afterwards and some very useful data is available in the school. This data could be used to inform good target setting in future DEIS action planning. The school should also consider further in-class support in the infant classes to consolidate the pupils' oral language skills, particularly for those pupils for whom English is a second language. It is further recommended that increased emphasis be placed upon developing pupils' oral language skills as they progress through the school through placing a sustained focus on the attainment of specific curriculum objectives, planning and delivering discrete oral language lessons and using oral language indicators to assess and monitor progress.
- While the school places a great emphasis on literacy and puts a lot of effort into its literacy interventions, responses to questionnaires administered as part of this evaluation indicate that sixth class pupils are not as confident about their literacy skills as they are about their numeracy skills.

Numeracy

- The quality of planning for numeracy is satisfactory. The school's numeracy plan sets out to target the improved attainment of one cohort of pupils performing below the 16th percentile in the standardised tests. Further measurable targets need to be devised for other cohorts of pupils on a whole-school basis.
- The school implements a range of numeracy interventions and does so very effectively. These include Maths for Fun, Maths Recovery, Ready Set Go Maths, station teaching, the use of maths trails, coding and other information and communications technology (ICT) initiatives together with a range of problem-solving strategies.
- The school is well equipped with concrete materials and manipulatives to support the teaching of Mathematics. Good classroom practice was observed and pupils can explain their learning confidently. In the questionnaire administered as part of this evaluation all pupils in sixth class agreed that they like Maths.
- Most interventions are assessed before and afterwards and some very useful data is available in the school. This data can be used to identify cohorts of pupils in need of further supports in numeracy across the school and the information can then be used to inform good target setting in the DEIS action planning process going forward.

2.2 Attendance, Retention, Transitions

- The quality of planning for attendance, retention and transitions is satisfactory. Whole-school attendance is targeted. However, there is evidence of some dis-improvement over the past four years. The school needs to analyse this trend further and to set specific targets for improvement in its DEIS plan.
- There are systems in place to communicate with parents after children have missed fifteen and twenty days. While these efforts are showing some success, school records also show that there is still a significant percentage of pupils who are absent for more than twenty days annually. The school now needs to identify the groups of poor attenders, to analyse their patterns of absenteeism and to set specific and measurable targets to improve their attendance.

- Full attendance is encouraged and rewarded monthly and annually. The HSCL coordinator monitors attendance and maintains regular contact with parents in this regard.
- The school provides breakfast packs for the majority of its pupils each morning. A significant number of pupils attend the afterschool clubs. In their responses to the Inspectorate survey most pupils in sixth class agreed that they like coming to school. This was further corroborated by the parents of the sixth class pupils and by the parents who attended the focus group interview who all agreed that their children enjoy coming to school.
- There is close liaison with Ardscoil Phádraig and Cnoc Mhuire, and a variety of activities takes place each year to smooth the transition of pupils from primary to post-primary school including assisting them with the necessary organisational skills. Analysis of responses to parent questionnaires indicates that the school should consider including fifth class among its target group for transitions in its DEIS planning process. Close links have also been established with the local pre-school providers through the HSCL coordinator.

2.3 Partnership with parents and others

- The quality of planning for partnership with parents and others is satisfactory. While targets have been identified for increased parental involvement, they have not been outlined in SMART terms.
- Parents who attended the focus group discussion and parents who completed the Inspectorate questionnaire were unanimous about the fact that the school makes them feel welcome. A newly decorated parents' room has just been made available in the school.
- Questionnaire responses also indicate that there is scope to further improve home-school communication regarding the children's learning. A significant majority of parents report that they do not have to sign their child's homework each night. The school is advised to target this as an area for improvement in terms of home-school communication.
- The HSCL coordinator organises a variety of activities to encourage parents to explore learning opportunities alongside their children in a fun way. These include Maths for Fun, Science for Fun and Biodiversity workshops, all of which are well organised and well attended by an enthusiastic group of parents. The school now needs to consider organising further courses for parents which will help them to support their children's learning and to incorporate these as SMART targets in the DEIS plan.
- Inter-agency work is essential to the success of DEIS and the school has forged links with a variety of agencies including local sporting agencies, the Lus na Gréine Family Resource Centre, the Granard Knights and Conquests Heritage Centre and the local nursing homes.

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 of 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;