

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**  
**Department of Education and Skills**

**DEIS EVALUATION**

**REPORT**

<b>School Name</b>	St Mary's National School
<b>School Address</b>	Bishop St Limerick
<b>Roll number</b>	204050

**Date of Evaluation: 05-04-2017**



## **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; 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. The board of management of the school 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.

## DEIS Evaluation

### INSPECTION ACTIVITIES DURING THIS INSPECTION

<b>Dates of inspection</b>	03-05 April 2017
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Discussion with principal and teachers</li><li>• Examination of school's current action plans for improvement</li><li>• Observation of DEIS-related activities and interventions</li><li>• Pupil focus-group interview</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Parent focus-group interview</li><li>• Analysis of parent and pupil questionnaires</li><li>• Observation of teaching and learning</li><li>• Examination of pupils' work</li><li>• Interaction with pupils</li><li>• Feedback to principal and teachers</li></ul>

### SCHOOL CONTEXT

Saint Mary's National School, with an enrolment of 104 pupils, is a co-educational primary school in Limerick City under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Limerick. Participating in Band I of DEIS, it has the services of a home-school-community liaison (HSCL) coordinator. The school also has access to a Limerick DEIS literacy project coordinator appointed as part of the educational response to the Limerick Regeneration Programme. It participates in the School Completion Programme (SCP). The staff comprises an administrative principal, six mainstream class teachers and five support teachers. Two special-needs assistants (SNAs) work in the school. A pre-school based in the school is managed by the principal.

### 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 the leadership of the DEIS action planning for improvement process is very good. Well-planned and coordinated initiatives in literacy and numeracy are implemented at a whole-school level. However, there is scope to explicitly record specific target attainments on a whole-school basis.
- Teachers display commitment, diligence and high expectations of pupils. They affirm pupil effort and successfully implement a wide range of interventions and strategies that impact positively on pupil attainment.
- The amalgamated school has worked very successfully over five years to create a respectful, safe, welcoming and inclusive school climate. A monthly assembly positively affirms and promotes the school's ethos with parents and pupils.
- Partnerships and relationships with parents and relevant agencies are very good.
- The independent and collaborative work of the HSCL and SCP coordinators enables targeted pupils to benefit very effectively from DEIS supports.
- The attendance, retention and progression systems and strategies are of a very high quality.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

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

- The targets and actions in the DEIS action plan should be delineated in the short-term planning of all teachers. Target achievements and attainments need to be clearly recorded in monthly progress reports.
- The impact of classroom and small-group interventions should be specifically measured in order to ensure development and improvement in pupils' learning outcomes across the school.

## **DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **1. DEIS ACTION PLANNING IMPROVEMENT**

- The DEIS action planning process for improvement is of a very high quality overall. The targets set in the current three-year DEIS action plan (2014-2017) are monitored and reviewed systematically. Baseline data is analysed and measurable targets are re-set annually in order to identify expected outcomes for pupils. This effective monitoring ensures that accurate and useful data is available and enables identification of areas in need of further improvement.
- DEIS planning for literacy and numeracy would be enhanced if targets were specifically outlined in the short-term planning of each individual teacher in order to address the needs of the pupils more effectively. This would assist teachers to effectively record the pupils' attainment and development in monthly progress reports.
- A variety of initiatives is implemented very effectively to support pupils' learning in both literacy and numeracy. As a result of these very good practices, pupils are afforded positive opportunities to engage in quality learning experiences. Nevertheless, all interventions and strategies should be clearly linked to achieving DEIS targets and they should be regularly monitored to assess their effectiveness.
- A very broad range of DEIS resources are used effectively and efficiently.
- It is commendable that staff members have embraced and participated in much continuous professional development (CPD) with the noteworthy support of the board of management.
- 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 literacy planning, provision and pupil attainment is very good overall. A broad variety of literacy programmes including *Literacy Lift-Off*, *Little Voices*, *Reading Recovery*, reciprocal reading and oral language stations is implemented in a structured and highly effective manner across the school. Assessment data indicates that these are impacting positively on pupils' literacy skill development. It is important that the school maintains regular monitoring of all initiatives to ensure their continued effectiveness. Good standards

have been attained in writing. These should be maintained through the consistent implementation of the school's writing policy and the development of a process writing approach.

- Overall, the teaching observed in all settings visited was of a very good quality. Team-teaching is an effective feature of practice in all classes. Recording of the pupils' engagement and learning during team-teaching would further enhance the learning potential of the interventions.
- There is scope to further develop the implementation of *AISTEAR: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* in the infant classrooms.
- Significant successes have been achieved with the school's particular focus on books, reading and book-talk. This is very commendable. The practice in some classes of visits to the library from home and school is commendable and should be implemented and consolidated on a whole-school basis. Measurable targets set for specific cohorts of pupils, in both literacy and numeracy at the lowest attainment levels, have been very effective in achieving improvements. Efforts are now concentrated on establishing a more-focused target-setting approach for pupils achieving at the mid-range percentiles.

### **Numeracy**

- Overall, planning and provision for improvement in numeracy is very good. Targets and actions are very clearly laid out. A number of strategies and differentiated approaches to improve learning outcomes in numeracy are implemented including *Ready, Set, Go Maths*, *Maths Recovery*, *Maths for Fun*, *Mata sa Rang*, and maths activity stations. The pupils' engagement with group-work is very enthusiastic and very effective. To optimise the impact of this work, the targets set for station teaching and group-work should be incorporated into the targets outlined at each individual class level in order to consolidate and improve pupil learning outcomes. These should then be recorded in monthly progress reports. As with literacy, consistent monitoring and recording of pupils' engagement and learning during team-teaching is necessary in order to evaluate the learning potential of these interventions.
- Positive attitudes towards Mathematics are encouraged. Classroom environments are maths-rich and the acquisition and use of mathematical language is prioritised. Very high quality learning was noted in all settings. An extensive range of assessment approaches is used to establish baseline data on mathematical attainment. These are systematically analysed to identify key areas for further improvement.
- The recent introduction of pupil portfolios is very good practice, encouraging pupils to reflect upon and talk about their learning. These should enable pupil self-assessment and promote a sense of ownership of and responsibility for their learning among the pupils. The whole-school policy to assessment for learning (AFL) should provide structure and support and ensure consistency of provision in this area across the school.

### **2.2. Attendance, Retention, Progression**

- Pupil attendance is very good. Strategic actions to support attendance are well implemented and attendance levels are improving consistently. The monitoring of pupils' progress is sustained, precise and definite. Percentage attendance levels are monitored and analysed.

The school places a very strong emphasis on recognising and rewarding good attendance. It supports parental awareness and understanding of the importance of education. Effective tracking systems focus on specific patterns of attendance and punctuality and inform target-setting for specific cohorts of pupils.

- The planning, monitoring and evaluating of the impact and progress of attendance, retention and progression initiatives is of a very high quality. Pupil achievements, behaviour and efforts are publicly recognised throughout the school and their improved attendance levels are acclaimed.
- A monthly assembly for the school community affirms the culture and ethos of “*ár ndícheall i gcónaí*” and is characterised by mutual respect, dignity, fairness and celebration.
- A breakfast club, attended by parents and pupils is very well organised and effectively managed by Barnardos and supported by HSCL and SCP.

### 2.3. Partnership with parents and others

- St Mary’s is a very welcoming and inclusive school with a clear child-centred environment. Very positive and active relationships with the parents and with a broad range of community, statutory and voluntary organisations are consistently nurtured. An open and warm atmosphere for pupils and parents is very constructively promoted and the care and commitment to the pupils’ well-being is of a very high quality
- Positive behaviour management initiatives and programmes, including *Incredible Years*, *Friends for Life*, *Roots of Empathy* and *Dina* are well implemented and all pupils engage enthusiastically in the activities and lessons organised.
- During the focus-group discussion, the parents expressed very strong levels of satisfaction with the quality of their children’s learning experiences and with the meaningful role played by parents in a range of aspects of school life. They praised the school’s encouragement of parental involvement. Some parents are very actively involved in assisting in the implementation of a variety of strategies in the school. This involvement has proven very successful in improving pupils’ motivation and engagement in learning.
- The work of the HSCL coordinator is of a very high standard. She provides a valuable school-community link and plans, co-ordinates and monitors a broad range of appropriate activities for pupils. She also organises a range of courses for parents. The cohesion and implementation of the school’s transition policy and programme entitled *My Child, My Vision* is highly commended. The joint collaborative and supportive professional work of the HSCL and the SCP is acknowledged. The SCP is operated in a very systematic manner and SCP project workers effectively support targeted pupils through a range of in-school and out-of-school activities.
- A Student Council represents the voice of the pupils in the life of the school in an effective manner.
- Members of the school staff are very highly commended for the coordination and supervision of a homework club for pupils from second to fifth classes on three evenings per week.
- The *Sing out with Strings* music project, coordinated and managed by the Irish Chamber Orchestra, has allowed children to become proficient in string instruments. The school choir and orchestra provide regular public performances

# **Appendix**

**SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT**

**Submitted by the Board of Management**

## **Part A Observations on the content of the inspection report**

The Staff, Board of Management and school community are extremely pleased with this report on the recent DEIS evaluation undertaken in St. Marys N.S. The very high quality findings reflect the commitment, diligence and dedication of all the staff and parents.

We are very glad that the atmosphere of welcome, respect and inclusiveness was captured during the days of the inspection. We have very high expectations of our pupils and the school is a child centred environment.

The explicit recording of specific targets is already being carried out by a dedicated data analysis team in the school. Results and data are analysed each year, targets are set, referred to and discussed at our monthly Staff Meetings. The staff engage in regular monitoring of all initiatives to ensure their continuous effectiveness and will continue to promote this best practise into all classes and across all initiatives.

The inspection was a very positive and affirming experience for us all.

## **Part B Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection.**

At our staff meeting in May 2017 the staff discussed the actions we plan to take to address the recommendations of the inspectorate.

Targets are outlined with the help of our data analysis team at the September staff meeting each year. These targets will now be inserted into each teacher's short term planning for the whole year and will also be inserted into the monthly *Cuntas Míosúil*. Targets, achievements and attainments (DEIS Action Plan) will be recorded in our monthly reports. These targets will be referred to each month by each teacher in their monthly reflections. Every staff member will thus be very clear on targets and the achievement of same.

The impact of classroom SGLI is already being monitored in measuring improvement in Reading Age. However we will now look at measuring other specific target areas e.g. fluency, comprehension etc., and record same. We will be more explicit in our recording and use of teacher checklists for quick regular monitoring. This will ensure development and improvement in pupil learning outcomes across the school.



## 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
<b>Very Good</b>	<b>Very good</b> 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 <b>outstanding</b> 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
<b>Good</b>	<b>Good</b> 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' 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
<b>Satisfactory</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b> 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
<b>Fair</b>	<b>Fair</b> 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' learning; less than satisfactory; experiencing difficulty; must improve in specified areas; action required to improve
<b>Weak</b>	<b>Weak</b> 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;