

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

DEIS EVALUATION

REPORT

School Name	Thomond Primary School
School Address	Ballynanty Road Limerick
Roll number	20460W

Date of Evaluation: 17-10-2018



An Roinn Oideachais
agus Scileanna
Department of
Education and Skills

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 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.

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

Date of inspection	17-10-2018
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

Thomond Primary School is a co-educational primary school in Limerick City, operating under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Limerick. The school participates in Band 1 of DEIS. Thomond Primary School was established in 2015, as a result of the amalgamation of St Munchin's Boys' and Girls' Schools and St Lelia's Infant School. Thomond Primary School has an administrative principal, thirteen mainstream class teachers and nine special education teachers (SETs). The school has the services of a full-time home school community liaison (HSCL) co-ordinator and participates in the School Completion Programme (SCP). At the time of the evaluation there were 221 pupils enrolled in the school. The school participates in the Department's School Excellence Fund.

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 quality of leadership and management in the school is very good.
- The overall quality of support for the pupils' wellbeing is very good, with a very high quality of pupil care being evident in most of the DEIS initiatives and programmes.
- Overall DEIS action planning for improvement is good, with many very good aspects; the DEIS action- planning process is not monitored effectively.
- DEIS action planning for literacy and numeracy is good; there are opportunities to improve the whole-school implementation of the agreed strategies.
- The quality of action planning for retention and transitions is very good; the attendance and punctuality of some pupils is less than satisfactory.
- DEIS action planning for partnership with parents and others is good overall, with many very good aspects.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

- The school should ensure that the impact of the DEIS action-planning process is monitored more consistently.
- The implementation of DEIS action-planning strategies for literacy and numeracy should be reviewed, to ensure greater consistency and consolidation across the whole school.

- Additional strategies for improving the attendance and punctuality of specific target groups of pupils should be identified and implemented.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. DEIS ACTION PLANNING FOR IMPROVEMENT

- The overall quality of DEIS action planning for improvement is good. There are very good aspects to the leadership of DEIS planning. In particular, the principal promotes a staff culture committed to achieving the targets set under each of the DEIS themes.
- Useful baseline information has been gathered as part of the target-setting stage of the DEIS action-planning process. Clear and appropriate targets have been set for most of the DEIS themes. The targets are based on the analysis of wide range of relevant data. Overall, the implementation of agreed actions to attain these targets is having a positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning in the school.
- The school encourages staff members to avail of continuing professional development (CPD) opportunities to support its DEIS action planning. This has assisted the school in the implementation of a variety of initiatives under each of the DEIS themes. Several members of staff have developed expertise in a range of literacy and numeracy programmes. There is a need, however, to monitor the implementation of the initiatives and interventions to ensure greater consistency throughout the school. Improved monitoring should also ensure that the effectiveness of each initiative can be easily measured.
- Overall, DEIS resources are used effectively and efficiently in both mainstream classrooms and special education settings. A wide range of teaching aids is used to enhance the implementation of the DEIS initiatives. Additional teaching resources are used effectively, overall, to facilitate the provision of station teaching and small-group instruction. In some cases, however, there is a need to ensure that all relevant personnel understand the initiatives and implement them in a consistent manner.
- The school places a highly commendable emphasis on developing pupils' wellbeing. Almost all teachers demonstrate great commitment to providing a high level of pastoral care for their pupils. The implementation of initiatives and interventions, such as The Incredible Years and the Dinosaur Social Skills and Problem Solving curriculum (DINA), is very good. The use of Circle Time to discuss pupils' feelings and emotions in some classrooms is exemplary.
- The school's Breakfast Club, established as part of the school's DEIS action planning, is an example of the school's commitment to enhancing pupils' wellbeing and encouraging parental involvement. The warmth of the welcome and the convivial atmosphere at breakfast has greatly assisted in improving attendance levels in the school.

2. DEIS THEMES

2.1 Literacy and Numeracy

Literacy

- The school's DEIS action planning for improvement in literacy is good. The analysis of data based on a wide variety of evidence, including pupils' views, has ensured that some clear targets have been set for literacy, with a clear focus on specific groups of pupils in most cases.
- The selection and implementation of strategies and initiatives to improve pupil attainment and progress in literacy is very good in most settings. The implementation of the strategies in

a small number of settings, however, is satisfactory. There is a need to focus on improving the implementation of strategies in these settings to ensure greater consistency across the school.

- Among the high-quality initiatives and strategies observed during the evaluation were Reading Recovery, Aistear in the junior classes, and Guided Reading in the senior classes. Talkabout and Talk Boost are enhancing pupils' oral language and presentation skills very effectively. It is recommended that Senior Talk Boost be introduced for the older pupils to expand on this very good practice.
- There is a very strong emphasis on early oral language development in the junior classes. The support provided for pupils with English as an Additional Language (EAL) needs to be reviewed, however, to ensure that greater focus is placed on oral language development for these pupils. While due attention is given to developing pupils' vocabulary at each class level, there needs to be greater emphasis on improving their sentence structure.
- Due attention is given to developing pupils' writing skills in most learning settings in the school. Overall, however, more emphasis needs to be placed on revising the work covered to consolidate pupils' knowledge and skills in the various writing genres.
- The school is very well-stocked with books. There is a need, however, to review the presentation and use of some class libraries to ensure that they play a more central role in developing the pupils' love of reading.
- There is evidence that the school's action planning for improvement in literacy is having a positive impact on pupil outcomes. The recording of individual pupils' progress in reading at some class levels is very good. The whole-school monitoring and evaluation of DEIS initiatives and strategies, however, especially for specific target groups of pupils, needs to be improved.

Numeracy

- The overall quality of DEIS action planning for improvement in numeracy is good. The analysis of the data collected is good. Most of the targets set for improving learner outcomes in numeracy are clear and specific. The strategies selected to achieve these targets are appropriate.
- Most teachers implement a wide range of strategies and initiatives very effectively, with a focus on target groups of pupils who have been identified as needing particular support. Strategies and programmes such as small group instruction, Maths Recovery and Maths for Fun are having a beneficial impact on many pupils' attainment in numeracy.
- Most teachers use a wide variety of high-quality teaching resources in mathematics lessons to enhance the pupils' learning experiences. Very good emphasis is placed on the language of Mathematics. Information and communications technology (ICT) is very well used, with Manga High being particularly successful in enhancing pupils' enjoyment and interest in Mathematics.
- Time and problem-solving have been identified as target areas for improvement in the DEIS action plan for numeracy. While there is evidence of very good engagement with these targets at whole-school level, the practice at some class levels varies in quality. There is a need to emphasise greater consistency across the school. It is recommended that the monitoring and evaluation of DEIS action planning for improvement in numeracy receive more attention.

2.2 Attendance, Retention, Transitions

- The overall quality of DEIS action planning for improvement in attendance, retention and transitions is good. The analysis of attendance and other relevant data has resulted in the setting of appropriate targets for attendance, retention and transitions.
- The school has identified and focused on a target group of pupils whose attendance has been particularly poor. The selection of strategies to reduce the level of absenteeism of these pupils needs to be reviewed. More effective whole-school strategies should be devised and implemented consistently. Specifically, it is recommended that this target group of pupils be the focus of intensive HSCL intervention, working with the pupils' families to improve their attendance.
- The punctuality of a small number of pupils is also cause for concern. It is recommended that the school consider strategies to encourage these pupils to come to school on time, especially during months identified in the plan as being especially problematic; February and November.
- A very good range of initiatives has been implemented to support the retention of pupils in the school. The school's emphasis on implementing initiatives that promote the pupils' active participation in their learning has proven to be very successful. The school reported that all pupils stay in school up to the end of sixth class.
- Programmes such as Zippy's Friends, Fun Friends, Friends of Life, Doodle Den and DINA are very effectively implemented. The equine project is particularly praiseworthy as a means of developing the pupils' practical skills and enhancing their and others' wellbeing. There is a need, however, to reconsider the value of some initiatives to ensure that the maximum number of pupils benefit from each programme implemented in the school.
- The school choir is an outstanding example of the school's success in improving pupils' attendance and retention. The quality of the teaching, accompaniment, participation and performance in the choir is excellent.
- A Homework Club operates very successfully in the school for the pupils at some class levels. Consideration should be given to providing homework facilities in the school for pupils at each class level from now on.
- The school has established very good links with local pre-schools and post-primary schools. This has ensured that the transition of pupils from early-years settings to primary school, and onwards to post-primary school, is very well supported. The HSCL and the SCP co-ordinators facilitate these transitions. In the pupil questionnaires, all of the pupils stated that they would stay in secondary school.

2.3 Partnership with parents and others

- The overall quality of the DEIS action planning for partnership with parents and others is good. Target-setting and the implementation of initiatives are good, although there is scope to increase parental input in the selection and evaluation of the DEIS initiatives and courses.
- The school provides a very good range of useful courses to assist parents with their personal and educational development, including very worthwhile parenting classes. Courses such as those on hairdressing further encourage parents' engagement with school life.
- The focus group of parents reported that The Incredible Years programme was particularly successful and beneficial. It was also reported that parental involvement in DEIS initiatives such as Maths for Fun has been very effective in improving pupils' attitude to school in general and to Mathematics in particular.

- Almost all of the parents stated in the parent questionnaires that they feel welcome in the school. The parents' room in the school has been the venue for successful coffee mornings. These have been used to inform parents about DEIS action planning and the DEIS initiatives to be implemented.
- The recent establishment of a parents' association in the school is commendable. This has resulted in increased parental participation in the school. This participation should now be expanded to facilitate greater parental involvement in the DEIS action planning process.
- Parents' questionnaires indicate that there is a need to improve aspects of the school's communication with parents. Specifically, the frequency and impact of home visits by the HSC co-ordinator should be reviewed.
- DEIS action planning has ensured that very effective links have been established with external agencies, such as the Health Service Executive (HSE). The input of speech and language therapists, for example, has been very valuable in enhancing the provision for pupils with special educational needs.

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part A Observations on the content of the inspection report

The board of management of Thomond Primary School wishes to acknowledge the very positive and affirming findings contained in the DEIS Evaluation Report. We believe it to be a validation of the vision and commitment of the entire school community in striving to achieve the highest standards in every aspect of the education of our pupils.

We are pleased that our commitment to providing a very high level of pastoral care for our pupils is recognised, and that our emphasis on developing pupils' wellbeing was reported as 'highly commendable'.

We welcome the finding that the quality of leadership and management is very good, and that the staff's strong commitment to achieving the targets set in our DEIS plan was seen to be having a positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning in the school.

The board of management is supportive of the recommendations and will use the evaluation to guide future planning.

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

The in-school management, literacy and numeracy teams will continue to meet regularly, and will give careful consideration to the recommendations in this report so as to ensure that initiatives and interventions are implemented with greater consistency, and monitored effectively throughout the school.

DEIS action planning strategies, initiatives and interventions will be reviewed at weekly numeracy and literacy focus group meetings, as well as at each staff meeting. CPD, modelling and support will continue to be provided to all staff, with on-going emphasis on mentoring of new staff.

The SEN timetable will be reviewed in January 2019 to provide for greater support of pupils with EAL needs.

The report acknowledged the effectiveness of the Talk Boost programme in enhancing pupil's oral language and presentation skills. We have arranged for whole-staff CPD on the Senior Talk Boost programme to take place in February 2019, and following this we intend on introducing this programme for the older pupils.

Following the evaluation, we implemented strategies to improve the attendance and punctuality of a specific target group. We ran "Early Bird Month" in November, as well as class and individual incentives and rewards for attendance and punctuality in November and December. We also engaged

with our SCP, who are now providing more intensive support to individuals and their families within this target group.

In November 2018 we sent a parent information booklet to all our families communicating the key targets from our DEIS plan. We intend to facilitate greater parental involvement in the DEIS action planning process in the future.

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;