

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

**DEIS EVALUATION**

**REPORT**

<b>School Name</b>	Mercy College Coolock
<b>School Address</b>	St Brendan's Drive Malahide Road Coolock
<b>Roll number</b>	60871V

**Date of Evaluation: 16-11-2018**



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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 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, 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

<b>Dates of inspection</b>	12 to 16 November 2018
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Interview with principal, deputy principal and relevant staff</li><li>• Examination of school's current action plans for improvement</li><li>• Observation of DEIS-related activities and interventions</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Parent focus-group interview</li><li>• Analysis of parent and student questionnaires</li><li>• Observation of teaching and learning</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Interaction with students</li><li>• Feedback to principal and relevant staff</li></ul>

### SCHOOL CONTEXT

Mercy College Coolock participates in the DEIS action plan. It has the services of a full-time home school community liaison (HSCL) coordinator and participates in the School Completion Programme (SCP). At the time of the evaluation there were 402 girls enrolled in the school. It offers the Junior Cycle, Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP), an optional Transition Year (TY), the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP), and the established Leaving Certificate.

### 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:

- There is highly effective leadership of the DEIS planning process, characterised by a shared vision for all students to reach their potential, a well-established collaborative approach and a committed DEIS core team.
- For most themes the targets set are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time bound (SMART); a few of the targets need to be refined.
- The subject plans reviewed showed good commitment by teachers to fulfilling the aims of the DEIS plan in their work; there is scope to develop these plans further.
- There is highly effective DEIS planning for literacy, numeracy and attainment and the achievement of the targets under these themes is supported by very high quality teaching and learning.
- Attendance planning, monitoring and strategies are very good overall; however, there is scope to improve the accuracy of attendance data.
- DEIS planning for retention and partnership with parents is of a very high standard; in particular, the guidance counsellor, and SCP and HSCL co-ordinators make a significant contribution to achieving the targets under these themes.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

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

- Targets should be set on a categorised or individual basis as needed, to ensure that they genuinely represent the current cohort of students and all targets should measure improvement in student outcomes.
- The teachers should develop the subject plans to include more detailed actions for DEIS interventions in the classroom and teacher reflections on students' examination attainment should be further developed.
- School management should put measures in place to ensure reliably accurate attendance data.

## DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. DEIS ACTION PLANNING FOR IMPROVEMENT

There is highly effective leadership of the DEIS planning process. The principal and deputy principal share a common vision to provide an inclusive, caring, progressive learning environment that supports students in reaching their potential. There is a well-established collaborative approach for identifying areas for development and strategies for improvement under all DEIS themes. The members of the DEIS core team bring a very strong personal commitment to this work. Parents and students are widely consulted. There is very good whole-school implementation of a wide variety of DEIS interventions inside and outside the classroom.

The school's current DEIS planning cycle is for the period 2017 to 2020. The board of management plays a significant role in implementing the DEIS plan which is closely monitored through DEIS/SSE being a routine meeting agenda item. Commendably, the board has acknowledged that it should have a stronger role in devising the DEIS plan.

Some teachers have participated in the Forbairt programme and have completed action research projects in areas of classroom practice. This approach complements DEIS planning by providing a highly effective framework for change at whole-school and classroom level. The current focus of this initiative is to promote the use of a range of assessment tools to check for understanding and learning gaps in order to improve student outcomes in terms of engagement and attainment.

DEIS planning for all themes is informed by varied and relevant data taken from a wide range of sources. The data is effectively used to set targets. For most themes the targets set are SMART, however, some targets outline measures for improvement rather than actual targets and need to be reframed. In other instances, the targets refer to outcomes for the overall cohort and are less meaningful. Targets should be set on a categorised or individual basis as needed to ensure that they genuinely represent the current cohort of students.

The data gathered is well used to establish measures that are linked to the achievement of the targets set. Commendably, high-quality teaching and learning is one of the measures identified to promote attendance and retention. The importance of classroom practice in implementing the literacy, numeracy and attainment strategies for all students is also highlighted in the DEIS plan. The commitment of the whole-school community to ensuring best outcomes for students has contributed greatly to the very good progress made in achieving the DEIS targets.

The subject plans reviewed showed good commitment by teachers to fulfilling the aims of the DEIS plan in their work. A broad outline of how the DEIS plan is implemented at classroom level is contained in the subject planning documentation. It is recommended that these outlines be further developed to provide detailed actions for interventions in teaching and learning.

The resources provided for DEIS are very effectively used to improve educational outcomes for all students in Mercy College and in particular for those in the targeted groups.

## **2. DEIS THEMES**

### **2.1 Literacy and Numeracy**

#### ***Literacy***

The quality of the literacy plan is excellent. SMART targets are set; they are established from baseline data, are monitored continually and reviewed annually. The main focus of the literacy plan for all first-year students is a well-structured individualised reading programme which encourages learners to self-manage their literacy progress. In addition to the full allocation for English, a library class is provided for literacy.

Whole-school measures to support literacy include a print-rich environment and opportunities for students to develop their written and oral literacy skills. The lessons observed showed a variety of highly effective literacy strategies; repetition of key-words and a focus on spelling and grammar. There remains scope to exploit the English meaning of keywords to explain concepts. Effective questioning to extend students' use of subject specific vocabulary was a feature of most lessons. Very good use of pair and group work to extend students' oral literacy and listening skills was also noted.

Following the continuum of support, in the support for some and few categories, the Special Education Teacher (SET) team applies an in-depth analysis to inform target setting for students with more complex literacy needs. Evidence demonstrates very good achievement of these targets overall.

#### ***Numeracy***

The quality of the numeracy plan is very good. The current targets are to maintain a high profile for numeracy and Mathematics, and to raise the numeracy levels in diagnostic tests over a three-year period. While one of these targets is SMART the other needs to be reframed to make it a measurable target. Additionally, the school is working on improving students' disposition to Mathematics. The questionnaires administered as part of this evaluation indicate that this is an area for development.

Effective initiatives to promote a positive attitude to Mathematics are in place. The lessons observed showed some good highlighting of mathematical concepts when they arose, and opportunities provided for problem solving. Additional mathematics lessons are provided for higher-level students in some year groups and coding has been added to the timetable to further facilitate critical thinking.

Specialised numeracy support is provided for students experiencing significant difficulty in Mathematics and additional challenge is provided for students of higher ability. Raising the uptake of higher-level Mathematics in junior and senior cycle is prioritised under the numeracy plan. Very good progress has been made so far. However, a stronger focus on classroom practice to promote independence, persistence and resilience in Mathematics should be implemented.

#### ***Examination attainment***

The DEIS plan for attainment is exemplary and is underpinned by a whole-school shared vision of inclusion and care. The targets set are SMART and focus on improving standards of achievement and uptake of higher level in subjects. The targets are appropriately differentiated to account for the school's context. In keeping with very good practice the analysis of students' achievement is individualised and made meaningful by the wide range of data sources used. There is evidence of very good achievement of the stated targets.

There is a highly effective monitoring system which sees teachers formally reflect on each student's examination attainment. Most of these reflections indicate good attention to the student behaviours or contexts that may influence achievement. The next step for this reflective practice is to create an

action plan for optimising the impact that varied teaching and learning strategies have on achievement.

It is very positive that there are accredited programmes provided for students with complex learning needs. The school's inclusive practices and commitment to mixed-ability teaching significantly enhances students' holistic school experience. There is no LCA currently; the school should keep the introduction of this programme on the agenda so that the full range of suitable options is available. Support for students in the targeted groups provided by the HSCL, guidance, SET team, SCP co-ordinator, and care team contributes significantly to very good student outcomes.

Overall, the very good quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed contributed greatly to students' achievement. In a majority of lessons high expectations for student achievement were demonstrated through teachers encouraging, facilitating and trusting students to be active agents in their own learning. This highly effective practice should be extended to all lessons.

## **2.2 Attendance, Retention, Transitions**

Attendance planning, monitoring and the measures are very good overall. The targets set are well informed and realistic. However, there is scope to have separate targets for the various levels of non-attendance in the school. An electronic attendance recording system is in place and is used less consistently than it could be. A concerted commitment to the accurate recording of attendance is required to ensure reliably accurate attendance data.

Highly effective measures are in place to address issues in attendance, retention and transitions. The breakfast and lunch clubs successfully attract a large cohort of students. The homework and evening study provision are also very well attended. The school provides a range of co-curricular and extracurricular activities that creates a sense of belonging in the school.

The retention and transitions targets centre on improving outcomes for students or on maintaining the very good progress made to date, which is appropriate. There is scope to refine the transition targets to ensure that they are SMART and measure improvement in student outcomes.

Excellent co-operation between the school and outside agencies and a range of local alternative education providers give students every available opportunity to succeed in education. The school works hard to foster a culture of staying in school to Leaving Certificate and to supporting students to make appropriate transitions. Students' educational and career destinations are tracked on leaving school.

## **2.3 Partnership with parents and others**

Very good commitment to partnership with parents was evident in the positive contributions at the parents' focus group meeting. The targets set for partnership with parents centre on improving attendance at parent-teacher meetings and increasing participation in the parents' association. Very good success is evident in the now vibrant and growing parents' association and also in the available data on attendance at parent teacher meetings.

Very effective partnership with parents is evident in the processes in place for meeting the individual needs of students in the targeted groups. There is a warm and welcoming parents' room which is at the heart of the school. Worthwhile courses for parents in a variety of areas of interest are fully availed of.

There are very good links between the school and relevant organisations. The school is involved in various local networks and this is used as a significant agent to increase opportunities for students.

There is a very high level of cooperation between the school and its feeder primary schools and also third level institutions. The guidance counsellor and SCP co-ordinator are working very effectively in this area. The HSCL service is further enhancing links between school and home.

## **Appendix**

School response to the report

**Submitted by the Board of Management**



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

The Board welcomes this very positive, affirming DEIS evaluation report that identifies and highlights many of the key strengths and highly effective practices of Mercy College Coolock, in particular:

- The whole-school shared vision of an inclusive, caring, progressive learning environment that supports students in reaching their potential
- The well-established collaborative approach
- Highly effective leadership
- Very high quality teaching and learning
- High expectations for student achievement demonstrated through teachers encouraging, facilitating and trusting students to be active agents in their own learning
- Students widely consulted
- Exemplary plan for attainment and highly effective monitoring the excellent literacy plan
- The highly effective planning for numeracy and measures to address attendance, retention and transitions
- Very good commitment to partnership with parents
- A very high level of cooperation between the school and its feeder primary schools, outside agencies and also third level institutions

### **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 Board is committed to acting on the recommendations in this report.
- Work to address the recommendation made in relation to setting targets on a categorized or individual basis has already commenced in the area of attendance. Other targets will be re-framed as necessary.
- The Board will support and monitor the further development of subject plans.
- Teacher reflections on students' examination attainment will be further developed to include the impact of various teaching and learning strategies on achievement. Preliminary planning for this is underway.
- Ongoing monitoring of attendance data will continue and further work will take place to ensure accurate recording of data.

## 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
<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'/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
<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'/students' 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;