

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

DEIS EVALUATION

REPORT

School Name	New Cross College
School Address	Cappagh Road Finglas Dublin 11
Roll number	68181N

Date of Evaluation: 15-03-2019



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 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

Dates of inspection	12-03-2019 to 15-03-2019
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• Student focus-group interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Parent focus-group interview• Analysis of parent and student questionnaires• Observation of teaching and learning• Examination of students' work• Interaction with students• Feedback to principal and relevant staff

SCHOOL CONTEXT

New Cross College participates in the DEIS action plan. It has the services of a full-time home school community liaison (HSCL) co-ordinator and participates in the School Completion Programme (SCP). It offers the Junior Cycle, Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP), a compulsory Transition Year (TY), Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) programme and the established Leaving Certificate. At the time of the evaluation there were 183 students enrolled in the school.

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 very effective leadership of the DEIS planning process.
- The members of the DEIS core team demonstrate a very strong commitment to their work and are highly effective in DEIS planning; however, the co-ordination of the process is not sufficiently streamlined.
- All of the school's DEIS resources and in particular the JCSP library and librarian, HSCL co-ordinator, behaviour for learning (BFL) teacher, and SCP interventions are very effectively deployed to improve outcomes for students.
- DEIS planning for literacy is very good and there is evident improvement in literacy standards in the available data; planning for numeracy is good but requires clearer target setting and measuring of progress.
- Target setting and the measures chosen to improve attainment are good overall; the monitoring aspect of this theme is not sufficiently individualised to provide a reliable measure of achievement.
- Target setting and the measures to promote good attendance, retention and transitions are very good overall but guidance provision requires significant improvement to reach an effective standard.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

- The school should introduce an electronic system to support the co-ordination of DEIS planning and whole-school communication around the process.
- Clearer target setting and measuring of progress in numeracy should be put in place.
- All targets should be set using all of the relevant and available data, and attainment targets should include the alternative achievements that are now recognised in the Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA).
- Decisions regarding curricular, further education and work options should be further supported, higher expectations for student outcomes in terms of progression should be maintained, and student destinations after school should be comprehensively tracked.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. DEIS ACTION PLANNING FOR IMPROVEMENT

There is very effective leadership of the DEIS planning process. The members of the leadership team share a common vision that centres on creating a compassionate school environment where students are supported to stay in school and to reach their potential. The talents, interests and leadership potential of teachers are recognised as central to the successful implementation of the DEIS plan. There is an established collaborative DEIS process, involving relevant key personnel for identifying areas for development and strategies for bringing about improvement under all DEIS themes.

There is a DEIS core team whose members demonstrate a very strong commitment to their work and are highly effective in DEIS planning. Subject teachers are committed to planning for and implementing DEIS strategies for improvement in their classrooms. However, the overall co-ordination of the process is not sufficiently streamlined. The school should introduce an electronic system to support the co-ordination of DEIS planning and whole-school communication around the process.

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 and to support the implementation of the measures outlined in the plan. However, targets for some themes require refinement so that they are informed by all of the available and relevant data on the students to which the targets refer. This approach will support the school in identifying current, emerging and future students' needs so that the school can plan and prepare for addressing these needs in a timely manner.

For most themes the targets set are SMART, however, some targets need to be reframed so that they are actual targets for improvement in student outcomes. In some instances, the targets refer to the outcomes for the overall cohort. These targets are less meaningful. It is recommended that targets be set on a categorised basis to ensure that they genuinely represent the current cohort of students. A more individualised approach is necessary to ensure that the progress in achieving the targets is effectively measured.

It is good that extensive teacher CPD has been provided both from outside agencies and teachers making presentations at staff meetings. Furthermore, existing teacher expertise is very well used to develop teacher collaborative practice and to extend the use of co-teaching, for example. This approach provides a framework for supporting the implementation of the DEIS plan at classroom level.

In general, the sample of subject plans reviewed showed very good attention to DEIS planning. Most plans included literacy and numeracy strategies identified in the DEIS plan. The best plans incorporated DEIS targets and measures related to other themes and also had a section for teacher reflection. This exemplary practice should be extended to all subject plans.

The school uses the resources provided by DEIS for its intended purpose. It greatly benefits from the services of a JCSP library and full-time librarian. There is a homework club, run through the library that is well attended. The SCP interventions and the HSCL resource are highly effective. There is a breakfast club and lunch provided for students. The school is currently researching alternative food options and it is planned for students to be involved in this decision which is very good practice.

The school has successfully navigated the merging of two school cohorts. This represented a difficult time for classroom teachers who had to re-establish themselves in what was effectively a new school. The challenges in terms of student behaviour are now almost addressed; the work of the BFL teacher and the principal in leading this process has been exemplary. The next step for this process is to ensure

that all student interactions are fully respectful of each other. The spirit of behaviour management is restorative and more formal implementation of restorative practices should be considered.

2. DEIS THEMES

2.1 Literacy and Numeracy

Literacy

The quality of the DEIS plan for literacy is very good. There are two targets set, one of which is SMART and the other requires refinement to make it measurable. Following the continuum of support the SEN co-ordinator completes an analysis of literacy needs and demonstrates excellent use of data to set individual literacy targets, to implement actions for improvement, and to measure progress. A structured reading programme is in place. Evident improvement in reading and literacy is shown in the data generated by this reading programme.

In addition to the appropriate English provision, all junior cycle students are provided two periods per week in the library. The library with all of the activities that take place in it, is exceptional in achieving key targets under all DEIS themes. The library and the work of the librarian provides much more than just access to books, it provides a welcoming multi-purpose space that fosters a sense of belonging and is valued by all students in the school.

Whole-school measures to support literacy include the creation of a print-rich environment and the highlighting of key words in lessons. Best practice occurred when teachers used the meaning of key words to explain concepts, when necessary repetition was creatively facilitated, when key words were used in context and when students were facilitated in saying and writing the key words themselves. The development of oral literacy was more limited and opportunities for students to develop this essential skill should be included in all lessons.

Numeracy

The quality of the numeracy plan is good. A maths competency test is completed by first-year students, and attitudinal surveys are completed to establish baseline data in relevant numeracy areas. However, this baseline data is not sufficiently used to set the DEIS targets for numeracy. It is recommended that all data gathered be used to set SMART targets for numeracy, outlining projected improvement in students' outcomes, and being mindful of the continuum of support. Additionally, follow-up competency tests and surveys should be completed to measure improvement in numeracy.

Valuable measures are set out to improve numeracy standards. There is a whole-school approach to identifying opportunities for numeracy in lessons and adopting a consistent approach to numerical operations. While these measures have a part to play in improving numeracy there should be a stronger focus on critical thinking, problem solving and identifying patterns. The work of the SEN department and the Mathematics department in providing additional supports to students is not currently mentioned in the DEIS plan; these should be included as important DEIS actions.

Examination attainment

The quality of DEIS planning for attainment is good. There are two targets outlined; one is a target and the other is worded more like a measure. The target set is not sufficiently SMART and is too broad. Additionally, the target measures improvement from year-to-year and the student numbers are too

small to make this type of statistical analysis reliable. Targets for attainment should be set using all of the relevant data on the students to whom the targets refer, should reflect the continuum of support and should set appropriately high expectations for student achievement. Furthermore, the alternative achievements that are now recognised in the JCPA should be included in the attainment targets.

The monitoring of student achievement in the certificate examinations takes the form of a comparison against national norms. This approach does not provide a sufficiently contextualised perspective. It is recommended that student achievement be compared to intake data to provide a more comprehensive and realistic measure of improvement.

The impact that high quality classroom practice and a wide range of teaching approaches has on student outcomes is recognised by school leadership and is highlighted in the DEIS plan. Additionally, some DEIS resources have been used to create smaller classes to support improvement in literacy and numeracy. Some mathematics and English teachers are merging their class groups, allowing for co-teaching to facilitate more collaborative learning experiences for students; this good practice should be built upon and extended.

It is very good that the school has recently made the move from streaming to mixed-ability arrangements in Junior Cycle. This development has the potential to transform the students' learning experiences in the classroom, to raise expectations and to bring about improved student outcomes.

Good opportunities for student leadership are provided through the student council and senior students acting as mentors to first-year students, for example. However, there is a need to strengthen the student voice in lessons and to extend the range of student leadership roles in the school.

Teachers are aware of the need to further empower students to take responsibility for their own learning. They have received suitable training and adjusted the layout of classrooms to support collaborative learning. However, there is a reluctance to let go of the control of behaviour that whole-class teacher-led methodologies provide. Supports should be put in place to enable teachers to facilitate the use of more student-centred approaches. Such approaches are necessary for high levels of student engagement, participation and achievement.

2.2 Attendance, Retention, Transitions

Target setting and the measures to promote good attendance are very good overall. 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, attendance data is reliable and is cross-checked each day by SCP co-ordinator. The interventions chosen to address issues in attendance, retention and transitions, outline very good co-operation with the relevant outside agencies. The measured improvement in attendance in the last school year is evidence of the effectiveness of the DEIS actions for attendance.

The transition from primary to post-primary is very well managed by the HSCL and SEN co-ordinator. All of the necessary supports are in place to ensure that students settle into first year well. Very good interventions are in place to successfully re-integrate students who have been out of school for lengthy periods of time. Students transferring from other schools reported highly successful transitions systems and a high level of satisfaction with the move.

The targets for retention centre on maintaining the high numbers of students staying in school until Leaving Certificate. They are SMART and inform a range of valuable strategies for improvement.

Guidance provision to enact the transitions aspect of the DEIS plan requires significant improvement to reach an effective standard. Action is needed to improve the decisions regarding curricular options best suited to students' strengths and needs, and to extend the range of routes to further education and work. For some students it was evident that expectations for achievement and progressions were far too low. Additionally, student destinations after school should be comprehensively tracked.

2.3 Partnership with parents and others

Great commitment to partnership with parents was evident in the very 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 the participation of the targeted group of parents in courses and events. Very good achievement in progressing these targets is evident from the data available.

There is a vibrant parents' association whose contribution to the school is highly valued. Very effective partnership between the HSCL co-ordinator and 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. There are courses for parents in a variety of areas of interest which are very well attended.

There are good links between the school and a range of organisations in the area but there is scope to further use them as an agent to increase career opportunities for students. There is a high level of cooperation between the school and its feeder primary schools and also third-level institutions. The SCP co-ordinator is 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 of management welcomes the overall positivity of the report
- The board is pleased with the recognition of the effective leadership of the DEIS planning process
- The board is reassured that the school is compliant with all aspects of the child protection procedures
- The senior management will address the recommendations made in relation to guidance provision
- The board also acknowledges the areas of development that need improvement

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

{Blank}

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;