

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

DEIS EVALUATION

REPORT

School Name	Ennistymon Vocational School
School Address	Ennistymon Ennis Co Clare
Roll number	70840Q

Date of Evaluation: 12-10-2018



**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

Dates of inspection	8-10-2018 to 12-10-2018
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• 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, deputy principal and chairperson of the board of management

SCHOOL CONTEXT

Ennistymon Vocational School is a co-educational school operating under the auspices of Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board with a current enrolment of 240 students. The programmes offered are the Junior Certificate, the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP), an optional Transition Year, the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme and the established Leaving Certificate. The school has the services of a full-time home school community liaison (HSCL) co-ordinator and participates in the School Completion Programme (SCP). The SCP co-ordinator is also a member of the teaching staff.

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:

- DEIS action planning for improvement is satisfactory overall and planning for a number of DEIS themes requires significant improvement.
- The principal is aware of the school's changing needs, and a recent review of posts of responsibilities identified that the structures established in the school to support DEIS action planning for improvement were not effective and required development; it is important that this work is now prioritised.
- There was evidence of a wide range of relevant data being used effectively to make decisions about student supports; however, this activity formed part of individual teacher's work but was not used effectively for DEIS target setting and for the selection of DEIS strategies to bring about improvement.
- The quality of subject planning varied widely in the integration of whole-school DEIS strategies into the subject-specific context.
- The school, with effective input from the HSCL, guidance, counselling and SCP personnel, implements a range of effective interventions which support improvements in student attendance, attainment, retention and partnership with parents.
- As is appropriate, the school has approached DEIS action planning and school self-evaluation (SSE) as a single integrated process; however, an annual report has not been developed and communicated to the school community.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

- Senior management should take action to bring about a more strategic and co-ordinated approach to the planning, implementation and monitoring of actions for improvement; a summary of its priorities with regard to DEIS planning should be shared with the school community as part of its approach to SSE.
- SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound) targets based on the analysis of relevant data should be set across all the DEIS themes and measures, including teaching and learning strategies, should be agreed, implemented and monitored.
- Effective teaching and learning strategies should be linked to DEIS themes and targets for improvement, reflected meaningfully in subject and programme plans and used more consistently in classrooms.
- There is a need to make provision for the systematic, frequent gathering of information about students' attitudes, learning dispositions and interests, and to use that information in the DEIS action planning process.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. DEIS ACTION PLANNING FOR IMPROVEMENT

Overall, the quality of DEIS action planning is satisfactory, with good planning evident in some themes and significant improvement required in relation to the planning in other themes. The principal is aware of the school's changing needs, and seeks to respond to them. An example of this is a recent review of posts of responsibilities which identified that the structures in the school to support DEIS action planning for improvement were not effective and required development; it is important that this work is now prioritised.

Target setting requires improvement in most areas. Yearly targets, in addition to three-year targets, should be used to ensure that the targets are relevant for each particular cohort of students.

There was evidence of a wide range of relevant data being used effectively to make decisions about student provision. However, this activity formed part of individual teacher's work, for example the special educational needs (SEN) or guidance personnel, or the JCSP or SCP co-ordinators, but was not used effectively for DEIS target setting and for the selection of DEIS strategies to bring about improvement.

Staff are empowered to act on their own initiative and there are many examples of individual teacher's commitment to meeting students' needs. However, in the interest of efficiency there needs to be a more co-ordinated approach. The school's SSE process should be used to facilitate this work. It is important to ensure a whole-school approach to DEIS and teacher's responsibilities should rotate between themes to build leadership capacity among all staff. The quality of subject planning ranged from fair to good in relation to the integration of whole-school DEIS strategies into the subject-specific context and this needs to be addressed.

Generally, strategies to be implemented in order to achieve a target are not related to teaching and learning. On the occasion that teaching methodologies are identified as a strategy, they are not specific. It is recommended therefore that SMART targets based on the analysis of relevant data be set across the DEIS themes and measures, including specific in-class teaching and learning strategies, should be agreed, implemented and monitored at a whole-school level.

2. DEIS THEMES

2.1 Literacy and Numeracy

Literacy

DEIS planning for literacy is satisfactory. Presentation skills, increasing reading ability and organisation of learning are identified priorities. However, targets are not SMART and limited baseline data has been gathered. Also there are no strategies linked to the identified targets.

Information with regard to students' reading scores has been gathered, with standardised achievement testing being used. This information has been used to develop detailed student learning plans as well as interventions such as the first-year literacy strategy to cater for identified students. This very effective approach to addressing the specific learning needs of a targeted group should be reflected in the literacy section of the DEIS.

There were a number of lessons where the literacy strategies identified in the DEIS plan were used very effectively. However, this was not the case in all lessons. All teachers should work towards implementing the agreed strategies to support literacy development in the school.

The school has a small library with a range of books available for borrowing. Previously the school linked with the local community library and it would be worthwhile to reintroduce this arrangement.

Numeracy

DEIS planning for numeracy is fair. The targets and measures documented in the school's DEIS action plan relate primarily to the development of cross-curricular approaches to measurement and to increasing the number of students studying Mathematics at the highest level possible. Targets need to be more carefully aligned with baseline data and should be specific to the cohort of students rather than globally applicable. Also, the chosen target areas represent a narrow focus as they are related primarily to Mathematics, rather than to numeracy in a broader sense.

The numeracy team should be broadened to include representation from a variety of subject areas. This group should develop a common and broader understanding of numeracy, to include the use of higher-order thinking and learning through a discovery-based approach. This broader view should facilitate a more effective cross-curricular approach.

While individual teachers, in some of the lessons observed, demonstrated a willingness to engage students in numeracy-related tasks, approaches were individualised and not linked to a whole-school strategy. Subject and programme planning should be used as a conduit between the numeracy team and the classroom in order to ensure that all teachers are aware of where whole-school numeracy strategies fit within their own classroom practice.

Examination attainment

The quality of planning to improve examination attainment is satisfactory overall, with two targets having been set. However, these targets are too broad and not based on specific data, making it difficult to evaluate progress. Seventeen measures have been identified, with three relating directly to teaching and learning. When reviewing the targets for attainment, it is important to have a greater focus on teaching and learning strategies which occur in the classroom. Students in a focus-group meeting said that they were motivated to learn when the learning experiences were interactive and active rather than passive, when they were guided to understand how to make improvements to their learning and when they felt they were making progress in the subject. There is potential to utilise student voice to a greater extent in order to both inform and monitor effective teaching and learning practices.

While good data on examination attainment has been gathered at subject department level, it is suggested that, as well as gathering the data, this data be used to inform the development of actions for improvement relating to attainment.

2.2 Attendance, Retention, Transitions

Attendance

Attendance was recorded manually up until last year. Since then, the school has introduced electronic recording of attendance data and this is complemented by the continuation of manual recording. This new system is intended to form the basis for collecting, analysing and tracking attendance over time; and to inform target setting, strategy selection and implementation in the coming year. This approach is welcomed and will aid the school in identifying patterns of non-attendance more efficiently and accurately.

DEIS planning for attendance is fair, with no SMART targets having been identified. Of the three 'targets' noted in the DEIS plan, two of these are strategies and the remaining one is not specific or realistic. Senior management has been very proactive in recent years in establishing a positive learning environment within an inclusive and welcoming school. However, there is a need to support this by developing SMART targets for attendance. The importance of teaching and learning practices in the promotion of good attendance should be significantly strengthened in the DEIS attendance plan.

Improved attendance and excellence in attendance are celebrated and encouraged, however the results of the questionnaires conducted as a part of this evaluation suggest there is a need to enhance this further. A text-system is in place to notify parents of absences and a written explanation must be submitted when the student returns to school.

The SCP and HSCL co-ordinators play a vital role through providing a range of very valuable interventions to support good attendance such as the provision of breakfast and lunch clubs, and after-school study. The provision of a varied and learner-centred curriculum also supports attendance and a valuable subject-sampling programme is provided for first-year students.

The school has a clear code of behaviour. However, as the emphasis in the code is on actions, processes and sanctions to be applied in the case of student misbehaviour, it is suggested that a

greater emphasis be put on the encouragement of positive behaviour when next reviewing. This will reflect the positive restorative approach which is evident in practice and in other school policies and documents.

Retention

Overall, DEIS retention planning is good and two SMART targets relating to improving completion of junior cycle and senior cycle have been identified.

Personnel in guidance, counselling, SCP and HSCL make considerable efforts to work one-to-one with students and, where possible, their parents. This is supported by the work of the student support team who have targeted support for at-risk students and their families, ensuring efficient co-ordination and communication between in-school and external supports.

Student leadership is facilitated primarily through the elected members of the student council. The students that were met during the evaluation were proud of their school, confident and articulate young people. Surveying students to develop targets for all the DEIS themes and using this qualitative data to inform targets and strategies is recommended.

The school welcomes and supports students of all abilities and very good practices are in place to enable students with SEN to progress both academically and socially. Interventions include one-to-one and small-group withdrawal support. Team teaching has been expanded this year and is reported to be working well. To build on this worthwhile approach, a strategic focus on developing and sharing pedagogical practice is recommended to develop and advance the learners' classroom experience.

Transitions

DEIS planning for transitions is good and four targets relating to transitions have been identified. While these targets are measurable, attainable and realistic, they are not specific or time-bound. This should be addressed.

Good data has been gathered including valuable information about the destination of school leavers. Efficient strategies are in place to support student transitions and progression such as information evenings for parents, individual meetings with students, careers fairs, apprenticeship evenings and visits to colleges and work places. The practice of inviting past students to share experiences with current students and to raise expectations is highly commended.

2.3 Partnership with parents and others

DEIS planning has a good focus on developing partnerships within and beyond the school community. The principal and other leaders in the school value and support partnership with parents as a means of supporting students' learning and wellbeing. Parents who attended meetings with the inspection team reported very good relationships with senior management and staff in the

school. Courses such as numeracy for parents to improve their own skills and in turn help their children, and initiatives such as 'The One Book One Community' should be considered.

An annual fundraising concert for local charities is organised jointly by students, staff and the parents' council. This event acknowledges the business and community supports while at the same time showcasing the school's work and successes and further raising its profile as a school of and for the community.

The sharing of a summary in relation to relevant DEIS themes with parents is required and a system of enabling parental input to the plan should be established.

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 the very positive affirmation of the very many positive and effective interventions noted during the inspection which support improvement in student attendance, attainment, retention and partnership with parents.
- The Board notes the fact that there is an amalgamation pending, involving all 3 secondary schools in Ennistymon. Therefore, there is uncertainty with respect to timelines. This amalgamation was supposed to be completed in Sept 2018 with a new school being opened.
- Bearing this in mind, it is more appropriate to look at yearly targets as opposed to longer term as the situation is in a constant state of flux.

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

Recommendation 1

As is stated elsewhere and noted in the report already in the findings, Senior Management has already identified that the structures require development. The Board notes that the post structure has been restored since the 2018 Circular. Therefore these needs will be addressed and actions implemented once process has been completed.

Recommendations 2,3,4

Target setting will focus on yearly smart targets. As already stated, the continuing amalgamation situation continues to evolve and the need for greater certainty is clear. This ongoing uncertainty poses a challenge to long term planning for obvious reasons. Therefore yearly targets will be set following overall review.

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 very good 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;