

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

DEIS EVALUATION

REPORT

School Name	Columba College
School Address	Killucan Co Westmeath
Roll number	71430C

Date of Evaluation: 10-03-2017



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; educational progression; literacy; numeracy; partnership with parents; examination attainment, and 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 inspector(s) 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

Dates of inspection	6, 8, 10-03-2017
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discussion with principal, deputy principal and teachers• 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 student questionnaires• Observation of teaching and learning• Examination of students' work• Interaction with students• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and teachers

SCHOOL CONTEXT

Columba College, Killucan has participated in the DEIS action plan since 2007. It has the services of a part-time home-school-community liaison (HSCL) co-ordinator and participates in the School Completion Programme (SCP). It offers the Junior Certificate, Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP), the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) and the established Leaving Certificate. At the time of the evaluation there were 186 post-primary students enrolled in the school.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

The following key findings arise from this evaluation:

- The newly-appointed principal has demonstrated excellent commitment to advancing the process of DEIS action planning to improve outcomes for students.
- The DEIS planning structure is good and there is a very good whole-school awareness of DEIS interventions.
- The school, with effective input from the HSCL co-ordinator and SCP personnel, implements a range of effective interventions which support improvements in student attendance, attainment, retention and partnership with parents.
- A significant amount of student assessment data has been collated recently which will serve to enhance the DEIS action planning process.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

- There is a need for enhanced understanding of the DEIS action planning process so that student assessment, attainment and attitudinal data are analysed and used to set differentiated and SMART targets and the interventions selected should be clearly linked to these targets.
- Effective teaching and learning strategies associated with the principles of assessment for learning (AfL) should be linked to DEIS themes and should be used more consistently in classrooms.
- A comprehensive system of student tracking and profiling should be established to ensure that interventions are impacting positively on student progress and that students are achieving their potential.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. DEIS ACTION PLANNING IMPROVEMENT

The current DEIS plan is a one year plan to cover the year 2016-2017 and was ratified by the board of management in May 2016. The senior management team has changed in the interim as a new principal was appointed in the course of the first academic term. The principal, although very new to the role, has demonstrated excellent commitment to advancing the DEIS planning process in the school.

The overall quality of leadership of DEIS action planning for improvement is satisfactory. While some aspects of DEIS planning are very good others require improvement, in particular target setting and the alignment of interventions to targets. A three-year DEIS plan should be put in place and ratified by the board. To strengthen the quality of leadership of DEIS planning the individual roles of the senior management team should be clarified.

There are good structures in the school in relation to DEIS action planning. Every teacher is on a DEIS committee corresponding to the different themes of DEIS planning. Staff demonstrated very good awareness of DEIS interventions and themes and teachers are most committed to improving outcomes for the student cohort. The school provides a welcoming, inclusive and learner centred environment for students.

There are examples of effective and efficient use of DEIS resources particularly in relation to HSCL and SCP interventions. However, in the case of homework clubs and the *Study Hub* an increase in participation by students is suggested to ensure greater efficiency. The JCSP provides the school with extra resources and initiatives which are well used for the benefit of students. The school needs to implement the JCSP in line with the requirements of the programme and this will provide good support for DEIS action planning.

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, Numeracy and Examination Attainment

Literacy

- The quality of planning for the development of literacy skills is good and elements of highly effective practice were noted. Comprehensive baseline data from CAT 4, NGRT and standardised tests are gathered. Since the commencement of the second term excellent work in collating all data has been undertaken by the Special Education department. This is highly commended as in to the future it can be used to effectively support the profiling of students' progress.
- In total ten general targets have been set in relation to literacy development including notably oracy. However, these targets need to be differentiated and SMART.

- There is a wide range of literacy interventions in place and some of these are excellent, in particular the JCSP Reading Medley about which first-year students are most enthusiastic. Teachers reported that this intervention has led to significant progress in reading particularly for students in the mid-range ability.
- For the cohort of students with the lowest literacy levels the recently-acquired resources such as the *Vocabulary Enrichment Programme* and the *Literacy Box* are being implemented to good effect. These interventions should be documented in the DEIS plan.
- The school has created an excellent document outlining the whole-school approach to literacy which contains a number of effective whole-school interventions such as the use of key words, KWL strategy and oral presentations. In some lessons observed, very good practice was noted in relation to utilising these strategies. However, overall teachers need to provide more opportunities for students to speak about their learning and increase the use of strategies associated with AfL such as brain storming, think, pair, share, peer and self-assessment.
- Good strategies are employed to review and monitor progress such as retesting, teacher observation and the use of attitudinal surveys.

Numeracy

- There is scope to develop the overall quality of planning in the area of numeracy. Data relating to incoming first-year students is gathered from a number of sources such as the CAT 4 and standardised test results from primary school. However, the competency test for first-year students in Mathematics referenced in the DEIS plan was not administered until mid-way through the school year. This is a useful diagnostic tool and should be administered at the start of the school year in order to facilitate early intervention strategies.
- Most of the data from the various sources has not yet been analysed sufficiently to allow the setting of meaningful SMART targets.
- The numeracy team comprises teachers of Mathematics and most of the targets in the DEIS plan relate only to Mathematics. This indicates that there is a need for teachers to broaden their understanding of cross-curricular numeracy skills that can be developed among their learners and for a more cohesive approach to be taken across subject areas. Teachers should refer to the relevant section on key skills in the Framework for Junior Cycle 2015 to ensure clarity on this.
- A number of appropriate interventions are in place such as displays of number lines and signage using mathematical terms. Teachers use date and time at the start of lessons. To build on these practices a more focussed and targeted approach should be developed in relation to the teaching of numerical skills such as problem solving in the context of subject department and individual lesson planning.
- For students who need intensive support the *Numeracy Box* has recently been acquired and is being used. Team teaching is an excellent strategy which is being used in some first-year mathematics classes.
- Due to the general nature of the targets set, the review and evaluation methods are also not very specific. When reviewing the plan it is recommended that a systematic method of review and evaluation be documented which is clearly linked to SMART differentiated targets so that evidence for improvement in students' numeracy skills can be ascertained.

Examination Attainment

- There is scope to develop the quality of planning to improve examination attainment. While very good data on examination attainment has been gathered and good analysis at subject department level has taken place, very few SMART targets have been set. It is suggested that trends over the years should be analysed. The existing student attainment data should be used to profile students and set individual targets for them.
- The interventions outlined in the DEIS plan include study skills seminars and an increased emphasis on examinations in the school. Interventions should include a strong focus on optimal timetabling arrangements for students and teaching and learning strategies in the classroom. A review of student journals and copybooks indicated that there is variation in the amount of homework and quality of feedback given to students. Parents also cited this as an issue. In order to raise expectations and to support student attainment this needs to be addressed.
- The SCP provides a number of very good interventions such as homework clubs and a *Study Hub*. The homework club is provided for first-year students. Given that the capacity of this could be increased, consideration should be given to encouraging students from other year groups to attend. There was a lack of consistency in record keeping at some SCP interventions. In order to monitor the effectiveness of these valuable interventions for targeted students, recording of students' attendance should be formalised and monitored.

2.2. Attendance, Retention, Progression

- The quality of planning in relation to attendance is very good and the data shows that attendance is improving. There are good structures in place to monitor attendance and a significant amount of data has been gathered and analysed. The immediate texting system to alert parents to contact the school if their child is absent is working well.
- Interventions such as rewards and awards have contributed to improvements in attendance and data from surveys indicate very good awareness among the students of the importance of attendance. The provision of a school lunch, activities such as sports and drama all make important contributions in encouraging students to attend school. For future planning it is important to look at subsets of data and to emphasise the role of effective teaching and learning strategies which encourage good attendance.
- The quality of planning in relation to retention is very good and the data show very good retention overall. In the case of the few students who had not been retained staff had a comprehensive knowledge of the reasons why. The HSCL and personnel from SCP play a very important role in retaining students who are at risk and their work is highly commended.
- Good data in relation to progression has been gathered and the school has valuable information about the destination data of school leavers. It would be helpful to analyse the trends in these destinations over the last number of years. Good strategies are in place to support student progression such as information evenings for parents, individual meetings with students and visits to colleges and work places.
- Currently the school is not linked with any higher education institute. Given the benefits of such partnerships it is suggested that the school seek information on such possibilities. In order to raise expectations as early as possible strategies in the DEIS plan should also be devised for junior cycle

students. A target should be set to increase the uptake of modern languages among students as this is a requirement for entry into many higher education courses.

2.3. Partnership with parents and others

- The interventions to promote and sustain partnership with parents are very good. The classes for parents are successful. There is good uptake among parents of targeted students and data from parent surveys indicate optimal awareness of these classes. There is good evaluation of the impact of the partnership with parents albeit on a more informal basis. It is clear that the personnel in the school, particularly the HSCL has an in-depth knowledge and understanding of the parent body. Consideration could be given to formalising the planning around partnership and to setting SMART targets. The majority of parents surveyed state that the school is very welcoming of parents.
- There are many examples of good partnerships within the local community. The school has very good links with local primary schools. Through SCP links with businesses are fostered. The school has a very good care structure for students and has links with National Educational Psychological Service and other agencies to support student wellbeing.

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 1 Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board of Management and staff at Columba College accept the report as factually correct and an accurate evaluation of DEIS provision in the school at the time of inspection. The findings are a source of encouragement to us and we intend to further enhance the quality of teaching and learning at Columba College by implementing the recommendations.

Area 2 Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection.

The school staff have already begin to work with the PDST team to ensure that there is a whole school approach to the delivery of JCSP in line with the requirements of the programme. This will in turn provide good support for our three year DEIS plan and set out targeted teaching strategies as realistic interventions to be linked directly to our reviewed SMART targets.

Columba College has now applied for inclusion in the ETBI national instructional leadership programme. We will use this opportunity to spread good practice of Assessment for learning further throughout all subject departments within the school.

VS Ware and an internal student tracking system will now be used in conjunction with regular literacy and numeracy assessments to identify student progress and to set targets for all students. Our Guidance Department has also made contact with DCU and NUIM to develop direct relationships with these two universities.

The school would like to thank the Inspectorate team for their courtesy throughout the process and for the direction this process has provided.

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
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' 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' 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;