

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

DEIS EVALUATION

REPORT

School Name	Saint Oliver's Community College
School Address	Rathmullen Road Drogheda County Louth
Roll number	71761C

Date of Evaluation: 05-05-2017



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; progression; literacy; numeracy; at post-primary level, educational attainment including examination attainment; partnership with parents; 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 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

Dates of inspection	3 rd , 4 th and 5 th May 2017
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discussion with principal, deputy principals, teachers and School Completion Programme personnel• Examination of school's current DEIS action plans for improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of DEIS-related activities and interventions• 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 principals and teachers

SCHOOL CONTEXT

Saint Oliver's Community College is the largest post-primary school in Drogheda. It has the services of a full-time home-school-community liaison (HSCL) co-ordinator and participates in the School Completion Programme (SCP). All programmes are provided, Junior Certificate, Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP), an optional Transition Year (TY), Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP), Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) and the Leaving Certificate. Current-year enrolment is 1,288.

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 DEIS action planning for improvement to date has been very good and shows continuing improvement.
- School self-evaluation (SSE) has been adapted very well to DEIS planning; the school has improved the quality and broadened the ownership of planning by appointing SSE co-ordinators and cross-curricular teams guided by the six-step SSE process.
- DEIS planning is impacting positively on teaching and learning.
- The quality of subject planning varied widely in the integration of whole-school DEIS strategies into the subject-specific context.
- The school remains positive in addressing very challenging attendance data; strengthening student-teacher relations rightly takes priority over sanctions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

- Subject departments should be consistent in adapting the whole-school DEIS and SSE targets more clearly to the subject-specific context; the subject plans should set out the meaningful contribution that each department will make to the achievement of the targets.
- Structured opportunities should be considered for very recent former students who are attending post-Leaving Certificate or third-level colleges to meet current senior students with a view to encouraging them to show greater ambition in their choice of courses.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. DEIS ACTION PLANNING IMPROVEMENT

Leadership of DEIS planning is very good and shows continuing improvement. There is a clear focus on achieving improvement targets and baseline data informs the interventions listed to drive improvements. Particular students are commendably identified with specific measures and targets. DEIS targets and strategies are recurring items on whole-staff and board of management meetings. The current plan has been reviewed at twelve-monthly intervals, targets adjusted and a very helpful summary revised plan has been produced.

Elements of planning need to be improved. Some interventions have been confused with targets and certain targets appeared overly ambitious. The most recent planning for literacy and numeracy is much improved and is modelled closely on the SSE process. Leadership of DEIS planning has been broadened to include teams which identify new areas beyond the familiar seven DEIS themes; assessment and behaviour being examples. Teachers with particular interest and qualifications have been appointed SSE co-ordinators; this has increased ownership of the plan. The SSE planning process has been embedded through the school's participation as a research partner with Dublin City University. The early results have been positive.

DEIS planning is impacting positively on teaching and learning and was seen to inform the daily operation of the school. Senior management communicates a clear connection between the DEIS plan and classroom practice. To a large extent leadership of the DEIS plan has become synonymous with instructional leadership. Most lessons visited saw student-centred and active learning approaches used effectively with widespread affirmation of students. Staff members interviewed saw the plan as a core part of their work. This was not as evident in written subject department planning where the quality level varied widely in the integration of whole-school DEIS strategies into the subject-specific context. Subject-department planning work should better reflect the contribution that each subject area can deliver to supporting the attainment of DEIS targets.

The DEIS plan assigns SCP personnel an integral role in the care team and in the delivery and monitoring of SCP supports to the most disadvantaged students. They had a clear overview of their brief and held qualifications that are used to good effect in supporting potential early school leavers. The planning and review of interventions to the students of most urgent need were seen to be very effectively, and sensitively managed in the meeting of the care team that pooled all of the school's resources.

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 and Numeracy and Examination Attainment

Literacy

DEIS planning for literacy is very good; the co-ordinator holds a qualification in a SSE-related area. Standardised tests and other school-gathered baseline data were the starting points in implementing the SSE six-step process. SMART targets have been set for encouraging students to read for enjoyment, improve spelling and develop oral literacy. Measures such as the development of a school library and the facilitation of student presentations have been implemented effectively. Worthwhile

interventions specifically for students whose first language is not English, JCSP and SEN students are outlined in the DEIS plan.

The quality of planning for literacy varies across subject departments. Good practice was noted where plans outlined a strategy for improving subject-specific literacy and key words for each section of the courses. Very good practice was seen in lessons where the meaning of key words was explored to help students understand the concepts taught.

Numeracy

DEIS numeracy planning is very good. A cross-curriculum approach has been taken to integrating mathematical calculations and numeracy skills. Link personnel from the mathematics department are assisting subject departments in planning for numeracy. The numeracy review shows improvement in some areas; uptake of foundation-level Mathematics has reduced and higher-level uptake has increased.

Planning has been informed by analysis of attainment in certificate examinations, standardised test scores, student and teacher surveys, and international studies such as PISA. The previous DEIS numeracy plan set overly ambitious targets. Future numeracy planning should have more realistic targets. Subject department members should collaborate on how the DEIS numeracy interventions can support learning in their subjects and contribute to achieving whole-school targets.

Examination attainment

Planning for attainment is very good. SMART targets have been set for overall attainment and specifically for targeted students. Senior management oversees this work and has a thorough profile of attainment. New arrangements now track student progress in a more comprehensive way through academic monitoring and mentoring. The review of attainment indicates improvement in some areas and remains a work in progress in other areas.

The quality of planning for attainment at subject-department level varies across subjects. Some planning folders contain an analysis of attainment in certificate examinations. However, there is limited reflection on student outcomes and how this can be used to inform classroom practice. All subject departments should conduct an analysis of attainment. This analysis should be used to create an action plan that will inform how DEIS measures for attainment are used to address the DEIS attainment targets in each subject area.

2.2 Attendance, Retention, Progression

Attendance

The quality of planning for improvement in attendance is very good. Attendance data patterns examined showed the considerable scale of the challenge. Student questionnaire responses indicated that greater attention should be paid to awards for improved attendance.

Reviews are self-critical, noting for example discrepancies between teacher records and electronic records. Attendance data shows fluctuations in the levels of success achieved. Action has followed; monthly attendance reports now highlight the number of lessons missed rather than the number of days in a renewed effort to communicate the effects of absenteeism. Assistant year heads have been

appointed and the timetabling of form teachers to teach their tutorial classes at the first period in the morning is being phased in to increase student identification with teachers best known to them.

The overall rate of student absenteeism is a cause for concern, particularly at senior cycle. The school has set a target of reducing the rate of chronic absenteeism by 8%. While this target seems ambitious, the positive atmosphere noted in lessons suggests that the focus on improving the experience of learning in the classroom will continue to have a very powerful influence on attendance. Attendance rates in junior cycle are mostly very positive. The ongoing lowering of the number of suspensions has been a signal of the success of the focus on behaviour which favours restorative practices over suspensions.

Retention

DEIS retention planning is very good; the school has achieved the target of exceeding published national retention data for DEIS schools. Of the cohort of first-year entrants in 2009 the Junior Certificate retention rate was very high and the Leaving Certificate retention rate was high.

The target of ensuring a 100% transfer rate of pupils from the feeder primary schools so that they are all retained in the educational system has almost been achieved with SCP transfer programmes and good links with primary schools key factors in the success. Raising the proportion of third-year students who choose the optional TY programme to 50% has been achieved incrementally.

The review section is less assured on improving senior cycle retention. The school should explore the benefits of developing links with recent past-pupils who are still in the early stages of their studies beyond Leaving Certificate. Providing structured opportunities for these students to encourage existing students may contribute to a positive impact on retention.

Progression

The DEIS plan educational progression baseline data is very good and has been used to set meaningful improvement targets for different cohorts of students to University, Institute of Technology (IT) and Further Education (FE) courses. The targets for participation in University and IT courses were exceeded. These are very encouraging trends. Recent winners of J P McManus university scholarships are celebrated as are LCA students' achievements who reach the target of participation in FE courses.

FE courses should be seen as a first step in educational progression and not necessarily a destination. Tracking these students' next steps would provide a richer profile of student progression.

The measures in place in the DEIS plan to achieve progression targets are good and are succeeding in each of the categories. Key personnel with responsibility for supporting students and raising expectations are clearly identified both in the classroom and in guidance and pastoral supports. Some students reportedly choose less challenging courses due to a lack of self-confidence. The earlier recommendation of structured arrangements for current students to be advised by past-pupils currently studying level 5 to level 8 courses has relevance here also.

2.3 Partnership with parents and others

DEIS planning has a very good focus on developing partnerships within and beyond the school community. Good records exist of attendance at parent-teacher meetings and school events. The school has set itself increased targets to reach out more to parents. A parents' mathematics course to help them help their children with the subject drew high praise from attendees. There was strong evidence of the school maintaining home-school links in situations of significant challenge and in adapting rules to accommodate students' varied and demanding needs.

Links with local industry have provided students with the opportunity to develop their communication skills and learn of the human resource model in industry. A creative interpretation of partnership has included staff wellbeing in the partnership theme. There is scope also to identify partnership targets more clearly from the measures that support their achievement.

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 St. Oliver's Community College welcomes the recent DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) inspection report. The inspection team has undertaken a comprehensive and forensic analysis of the work of the College. The action plan ensures that the educational needs of children from disadvantaged communities are targeted with the aim of providing a safe and caring environment to allow all students to fulfil their potential.

The Board of Management commends the detailed planning processes, which were rated by the inspection team as of the highest quality, for each of the DEIS themes of literacy, numeracy, examination attainment, attendance, retention, progression and partnership with parents and others.

The work of school management, the team of teachers, parents, external agencies and focused programmes (Home School Community Liaison and School Completion Programme) combine to make a real and significant impact on the lives and prospects of each individual student in St. Oliver's Community College. It is particularly appropriate that the ethos of focusing on the individual student is reflected upon at this time with the celebration of a St. Oliver's Community College student scoring the highest result in Ireland for Leaving Certificate 2017.

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

Extensive planning has been invested in attracting and retaining students in school with great success. Even the most disillusioned student is encouraged to stay at school and complete the second level cycle. The inspection team identified the challenge of improving attendance rates as a key focus for improvement. The school self-evaluation (SSE) process is now employed to undertake a comprehensive review of existing practices, intensive research into attendance strategies and the compilation of a plan for improvement of school attendance. The Board of Management is confident that significant improvements will be the outcome of this systematic approach.

Subject plans have been reviewed with reference to DEIS and SSE targets.

The Board of Management is proud of former student achievements in colleges, universities and workplaces around the world. The suggestion of encouraging these former students to act as role models is to be integrated into school life.

The Board of Management welcomes the recognition of excellent practices and innovation in meeting the needs of the students in our community.

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'/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;