

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

**DEIS EVALUATION**

**REPORT**

<b>School Name</b>	Comeragh College
<b>School Address</b>	Greenside Carrick-On-Suir
<b>Roll number</b>	72400V

**Date of Evaluation: 13-05-2017**



## **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 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; a response was not received from the board.

## DEIS Evaluation

### INSPECTION ACTIVITIES

<b>Date of inspection</b>	13-05-2017
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Discussion with principal and teachers</li><li>• Examination of school's current action plans for improvement</li><li>• Observation of DEIS-related activities and interventions</li><li>• Student focus-group interview</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 teachers</li></ul>

### SCHOOL CONTEXT

Comeragh College 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 cycle, Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP), an optional Transition Year (TY) and the established Leaving Certificate. At the time of the evaluation, there were 302 post-primary 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:

- Leadership of DEIS action planning is of a very good quality.
- The quality of planning for improvement is very good overall, although links between some aspects of the plan should be enhanced.
- Very effective systems to support the DEIS process, incorporating very effective monitoring and evaluation, have been developed.
- A number of subject department plans reflected strong engagement with the DEIS plan, while other subject department plans displayed more limited engagement.
- As is appropriate, the school has approached DEIS action planning and school self-evaluation (SSE) as a single integrated process; however, a report to the school community has not yet been communicated.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

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

- Links between baseline data, targets, and actions should be enhanced in a number of areas of DEIS action planning.
- The very good practice with regard to DEIS planning evident in some subject department plans should be extended to all subject areas.
- The school should share a summary of its priorities with regard to DEIS planning with the school community as part of its approach to SSE.

## DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. DEIS ACTION PLANNING IMPROVEMENT

- Leadership of DEIS action planning is of a very good quality. DEIS planning is co-ordinated by the deputy principal. The core DEIS planning team leads the planning process in a highly effective manner which is producing improved outcomes for students. Very effective systems to support the DEIS planning process have been developed. The DEIS planning team meets on a regular basis throughout the school year. Meetings have clear agendas and decisions are recorded and acted upon.
- A DEIS plan has been developed. The planning process has involved gathering a wide range of baseline data, alongside the creation of numerous SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, time-bound) targets, actions, monitoring and evaluation procedures. The plan is effectively time-linked to support its implementation. The quality of planning for improvement is very good overall. In many cases, SMART targets are set and actions are clearly linked to these targets.
- Targets very frequently arise on the basis of good quality baseline data. However, in a number of areas of DEIS action planning, it is recommended that links between baseline data, targets, and actions should be enhanced. In other areas, some adjustment to targets set should be considered, in order to increase clarity with regard to the outcomes being sought and to discriminate between targets set and actions to be undertaken.
- The quality of choice of actions to support particular targets, as well as implementation of these actions, is at a very high level. Planned interventions and initiatives are implemented consistently. In particular, very effective practice in the monitoring and evaluation of actions and targets was evident in the records of meetings of the DEIS planning team.
- The school correctly views the DEIS process and the SSE process as one entity, leading to a single integrated plan. It is recommended that the school should now share a summary of its priorities with the school community as part of its approach to SSE. The anticipated development of the new school website is one suitable forum for achieving this aim.
- In a number of instances, the engagement of subject departments with elements of the DEIS plan is strongly reflected in subject planning folders so that actions in the DEIS plan are adapted to meet the particular context of these subjects. This level of engagement should serve as a model for all subject departments.
- The school endeavours to maximise the impact of DEIS resources available. A range of initiatives relevant to a variety of the DEIS themes was observed during the course of the evaluation.
- 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

- Overall, the quality of DEIS action planning in the area of literacy is good. In particular, the school has placed significant emphasis in the recent past on improving its use of data with regard to students' literacy.

- Currently, targets set in the area of literacy focus on improvements in student motivation with regard to literacy, oral language and the development of students' word consciousness. This is positive. However, targets are not currently clearly linked to baseline data collated in the area of literacy. It is recommended that this should form a focus in further developing the current DEIS plan, particularly where the adoption of some qualitative evidence-gathering tools might add further perspective. Targets with regard to literacy are not currently SMART as they do not incorporate features which will easily support the measurement of whether they have been achieved at the end of the current plan. This should also be addressed.
- Actions in the literacy section of the plan suggest considerable dedication and imagination on the part of staff and link clearly to targets identified. Effective monitoring arrangements are in place. The incorporation of additional baseline data will further enhance the monitoring and evaluation arrangements currently in place.

### **Numeracy**

- The quality of DEIS planning in numeracy is good. A good range of data has been collected in relation to numeracy, including analysis of students' attainment in Mathematics in certificate examinations and in a Mathematics competency test, and information garnered from an attitudinal student survey. It was reported that central to improving attainment in this area was the development of a positive mindset towards numeracy and Mathematics, and a target has been set to achieve this goal. One SMART target has been developed in relation to attainment in Mathematics in certificate examinations.
- Significant additional data has been collected and analysed during this academic year. This information might usefully inform the review of targets, along with agreed actions during the monitoring and evaluation phases and the subsequent setting of SMART targets.
- Overall, actions outlined in the DEIS plan generally relate to out-of-class strategies. While not stated in the plan, actions relating to enhancing students' problem-solving skills have begun to be implemented. This approach is commended as it was identified as a key area for improvement during this academic year. When reviewing the impact of strategies, in-class teaching and learning actions should be agreed and implemented.
- It was reported that discussion has begun with a limited number of subject departments regarding the teaching and application of similar mathematical concepts. This good practice should be extended to the teaching of other mathematical concepts and to all subject departments. Use of the key skill of *being numerate*, as set out in the Framework for Junior Cycle, would be useful in this regard. Subject departments should identify the key elements of this skill that could be coherently integrated with subject content knowledge. Commendably, mechanisms for monitoring progress and evaluating the impact of actions are in place.

### **Examination attainment**

- The quality of DEIS planning for examination attainment is very good. It is positive that an analysis of certificate examination results is undertaken and these form baseline data for setting SMART targets. In addition, the school has recently begun to use a cognitive-ability test in order to assess students' potential. Work undertaken by the deputy principal and the guidance counsellor has been central to the development of this area in the school's action planning. This is very good as it facilitates the consideration of expected attainment targets for students.
- A number of SMART targets has been set which relate to enhancing students' performance in certificate examinations. Management has also amassed data relating to the performance of individual subjects in the certificate examinations. This data and the SMART targets in the DEIS

plan have been used as a baseline to set subject-specific improvement targets for each subject in junior cycle. This is very good practice.

- Current strategies, outlined in the DEIS plan, used to enhance attainment relate to whole-school out-of-class actions. While these are valuable, the school should include strategies that relate to teaching and learning, and all subject departments should consider including appropriate in-class strategies. Subject departments should be mindful of the benefits for students of maximising opportunities for student discussion in all learning situations. Minutes of subject department meetings should include decisions regarding teaching strategies to be employed.
- Mechanisms for monitoring student progress and evaluating the impact of actions are in place. These include using the results of ability tests and end-of-term test results to inform discussions with first-year students when tracking their attainment. Following discussion, individual targets are set for students. This is excellent.

## **2.2. Attendance, Retention, Progression**

- DEIS action planning in the areas of attendance and retention is very good. The involvement of the SCP project worker and the HSCL co-ordinator, along with work by a staff member linked to the National Behaviour Support Service (NBSS), as well as administrative staff, has been central to the success of DEIS action planning in this area. In addition, a range of initiatives, supporting various elements of the DEIS plan, is organised as part of the JCSP through the work of the JCSP co-ordinator and the core team.
- The school has adopted new software which supports both its ability to record and to communicate regarding student absences and patterns of absences. Baseline data has been collated and has been examined in some depth. Patterns of absence have been identified and actions have been focused on addressing these gaps in the areas of retention and attendance.
- Targets in the areas of attendance and retention are clearly linked to this significant baseline data and to very good analysis of this data. In addition, actions identified are clearly linked to targets and evidence of a number of these actions being embedded in teachers' practice was observed during the evaluation.
- Regular monitoring of attendance and retention is undertaken through weekly attendance meetings and adjustments and improvements to the attendance approach are made as necessary. There has been a clear impact through the efforts of the school staff on the level of student attendance over the last number of years.
- Significant data is collated each year by the guidance counsellor which informs DEIS planning in the area of progression. A very clear target with regard to students' progression to third level education has been identified which arises from baseline data. Actions in this section of the DEIS plan are clearly linked to the target set. Monitoring and evaluation are also very effective in the context of DEIS planning. Overall, DEIS planning in the area of educational progression is very good.

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

- Very effective DEIS planning has been undertaken in the area of partnership with parents and others. The role of the HSCL co-ordinator is central in this area.
- Baseline data has been collated and targets are linked to this baseline data. A number of SMART targets has been identified and this is good practice. A range of actions to enhance links between the school and students' homes has been initiated, including a particular emphasis on enhanced communication through the school's new information management system. Monitoring and evaluation of partnership with parents is linked to targets set and baseline data.

- Parents interviewed during the evaluation were very positive with regard to the school's efforts in supporting their children and in ensuring that they gained the maximum benefits from their education. The school has developed very worthwhile and extensive links with external organisations and the local community which are utilised to support students in achieving in the other areas of the DEIS plan. It is suggested that the possibility of a further link with a major business or industry in the catchment area is also worthy of exploration.

## 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
<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;