



An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

DEIS Evaluation Report

REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	St. Tiernan's Community School
Seoladh na scoile/School address	Parkvale Balally Dublin 16
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	91343T
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	10-05-2023
Dáta eisiúna na tuairisce/ Date of issue of report	05/10/2023

What is a 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; a response was not received from the board.

Actions of the school to safeguard children and prevent and tackle bullying

During the inspection visit, the following checks in relation to the school's child protection and anti-bullying procedures were conducted:	
<i>Child Protection</i>	<i>Anti-bullying</i>
<ol style="list-style-type: none">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.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The school has developed an anti-bullying policy that meets the requirements of the <i>Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (2013)</i> and this policy is reviewed annually.2. The board of management minutes record that the principal provides a report to the board at least once a term on the overall number of bullying cases reported (by means of the bullying recording template provided in the <i>Procedures</i>) since the previous report to the board.3. The school's anti-bullying policy is published on its website and/or is readily accessible to board of management members, teachers, parents and pupils.4. The school has appropriate initiatives in place to promote a positive and inclusive school culture and environment.5. All teachers visited report that they have read the school's policy on anti-bullying

<ol style="list-style-type: none">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).8. Child protection records are maintained in a secure location.	<p>and that they are aware of their roles and responsibilities in preventing and tackling bullying.</p>
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The school met the requirements in relation to each of the checks above.

DEIS Evaluation

Date of inspection	10-05-2023
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 meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Parent focus-group meeting• Analysis of parent and pupil/student questionnaires• Observation of teaching and learning• Examination of students' work• Interaction with students• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and relevant staff

School context

St. Tiernan's Community School participates in the DEIS action plan. It has the services of a full-time home-school-community-liaison (HSCL) coordinator and participates in the School Completion Programme (SCP). At the time of the evaluation there were 323 students enrolled in the school.

It offers Junior Cycle including the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP) which is undertaken by all students. An optional Transition Year (TY) programme, the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP), the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) programme and the established Leaving Certificate are also offered.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- The quality of leadership and of DEIS action planning was good.
- The quality of planning and implementation of DEIS themes was good overall, however, some areas for improvement exist.
- The quality of action planning to support student wellbeing was very good; students' wellbeing was fostered through the provision of a broad range of curricular, co-curricular and extracurricular learning opportunities.
- DEIS resources were used effectively for their intended purpose.
- The HSCL and SCP officers worked very effectively with the DEIS team, however the quality of planning did not always reflect the very good practices in place.

Recommendations

- To ensure that all teachers implement actions across all themes, the DEIS working groups which were previously in place should be reconstituted and include teachers from a range of disciplines.
- The DEIS team should collaboratively review the DEIS action plan to ensure that meaningful actions and measures are identified for all targets across all themes.
- The DEIS team should make use of all available data to review the identification of priority students for each theme.
- The actions and measures for LCA should be reviewed under each theme to optimise their impact on this specific cohort.
- Teachers should share strategies on how to provide more individualised feedback to students and implement them.

Detailed findings and recommendations

1. DEIS action planning for improvement

The overall quality of leadership of DEIS was good. Effective planning and practices were noted in some areas of the DEIS themes, while in others, some improvement was required.

At the time of the evaluation, a new senior management team was in place. A core DEIS team had been established, with a nominated teacher charged with leading each theme. Due to unexpected staff changes, DEIS coordination was shared between two teachers. It is recommended that, one teacher take over this coordination role. All meetings at whole-school level incorporated DEIS related items. Prior to 2020, working groups had been in place for each theme. To ensure that all teachers implement actions across all themes, it is recommended that this good practice be reinstated, and DEIS working groups be reconstituted to include teachers from a range of different disciplines.

Continuing professional development (CPD) has been provided for DEIS team leaders. A new post of responsibility for leading teaching and learning was recently created. The post holder with responsibility for teaching and learning has very effectively led the drive for improvement in teaching and learning. Methodologies and strategies to improve teaching and learning have been outlined in the DEIS action plan. These have been shared with teachers through whole-staff meetings and peer CPD. Effective, and at times very effective, use of these strategies by teachers were observed in the lessons.

The school planned very effectively to improve student wellbeing. The quality of student support was very good. Students' holistic development was fostered through the provision of a broad range of curricular, co-curricular and extracurricular learning opportunities. There was a very strong sense of collegiality, community and dedication to the students among teachers. They had high levels of commitment to ensuring positive student experiences and are commended for volunteering their time for the benefit of students.

Overall, DEIS targets were SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, time-bound). Effective strategies were implemented on a whole-school basis and were generally understood and implemented by teachers. However, in places, the actions and measures were generic. This should be reviewed to ensure specific actions are outlined for all targets. The quality of monitoring and evaluating was good overall, with some improvement needed in monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of some of the interventions.

DEIS resources were used effectively for their intended purpose. The HSCL co-ordinator was in regular contact with the parents of students with irregular or poor attendance levels and made home visits as appropriate. A wide range of activities took place outside of class time. DEIS grants and the extra Guidance allocation were used to enhance student experience and outcomes. The School Meals Programme was available to all students, it is suggested that the school consider ways of monitoring who avails of this programme. The School Books Grants scheme was availed of to support targeted students as appropriate.

2. DEIS themes

2.1 Literacy and numeracy

Literacy

The quality of planning to improve literacy was good overall, with some very good implementation of the plan observed. Responses from student and parent questionnaires were very positive. The attention to literacy was good or very good in almost all lessons observed. The current target, to improve subject-specific vocabulary was observed in all lessons. In a small number of lessons, teachers also developed high frequency words with multiple

meanings, this good practice should be extended. It was positive that the school had implemented a vocabulary enrichment programme to promote literacy as a gateway skill. Further expansion of this programme should be considered.

Planning for the improvement of literacy was of a high quality overall. However, the team should now consider further developing literacy targets across a wider range of ability and subjects. Screening and tracking of literacy should also be further developed across a wider range of literacy skills to further inform the literacy plan.

Numeracy

The quality of planning to improve numeracy was satisfactory overall. Targets need to be further refined and consideration given to improving the measurement and evaluation of outcomes.

Attitudes to numeracy and Mathematics were positive in both the student and parent questionnaires. Students who took part in the focus group reported positively on the support they received with numeracy. There was some evidence of numeracy posters and visuals around the school. There was a whole-school approach to identifying opportunities for numeracy in subject plans and lessons. Effective teaching and learning strategies to improve numeracy were listed in the DEIS action plan. A minority of subject plans reviewed showed engagement with the DEIS numeracy initiatives. All subject departments should identify subject-specific numeracy targets as stated in the schools DEIS action plan. In the majority of the lessons observed, some limited attention was given to numeracy, but overall there was scope to further develop numeracy in lessons.

The setting of numeracy targets needs to be reviewed. At times, targets were vague, focusing on student awareness of numeracy. Consideration should be given to setting more concrete SMART numeracy targets aimed at driving improvement.

Numeracy targets referred to actions aimed at the year group cohorts, for example all third and sixth years, or all of junior cycle. There is a need to identify targeted students at the *some* and *few* levels of the support continuum. These may include students receiving support from the Additional Educational Needs (AEN) department or those showing a discrepancy between their numeracy attainment and their quantitative ability on their Cognitive Abilities Test (CAT) scores.

Examination attainment

The quality of planning and implementation for improving examination attainment was good overall. Baseline data had been prepared and targets set for improvement. However, targets did not reflect the changing nature of groups of students each year. It is recommended that targets for attainment be set for each cohort on an annual basis, taking available data that informs student potential into consideration. Some very good analysis of third year mock examination results was observed, where individual performance of students was analysed taking a variety of factors into consideration. Students deemed to be underperforming were identified and interventions were put in to place to raise achievement. It is recommended that the existing academic tracking system be extended to reflect the learning from this mock examination analysis to enable earlier academic intervention in all programmes. The success of these strategies should be measured for all year groups to ensure that underperformance is identified at an earlier stage so that early interventions can be implemented.

One of the attainment targets placed an emphasis on programme choice at Senior Cycle to ensure students were choosing the programme that best matched their needs. Following on from the success of this target, it is now timely that the actions and measures for LCA be reviewed under each theme to optimise their impact on this specific cohort, in order to increase retention levels and attainment in LCA.

Teacher professional development had been prioritised in the current school year, with a particular emphasis on learning intentions and success criteria in lessons. In most of the lessons observed, learning intentions were shared with students and learning was reviewed at the end of lessons. The use of differentiated success criteria was observed in a significant

minority of lessons. Other strategies outlined in the school's DEIS action plan, such as teachers recapping on previous work, and active learning strategies to promote student engagement, were also observed. Most teachers successfully used a variety of assessment for learning strategies in class. However, a review of students' work and feedback from students in the focus group revealed that overall, there was scope for teachers to provide more individualised feedback to students on how to improve their work.

2.2 Attendance, Retention, Transitions

Overall, the quality of planning and implementation for improving student attendance was good. The school had identified attendance as their primary focus for the current year. A 'check and connect' scheme had been established that linked targeted students to a nominated teacher who checked in with them every day. Attendance was monitored on the school's platform and parents could submit reasons for absence via the school app. Attendance is incorporated into the house awards system, with students receiving prizes for improved attendance. A successful attendance drive took place in March this year, with prizes awarded for improved attendance. It is suggested that these attendance drives occur at more regular intervals with a view to further promoting student attendance. The HSCL and SCP officers work very effectively with year heads and the support team to implement initiatives that support and improve attendance. Observation of a sample of interventions designed to improve attendance included the school meals programme, breakfast club, homework club, debating, gardening, art, table tennis, sports leagues and workshops. These revealed a varied uptake by students. Attendance at these interventions should be recorded and monitored to ensure that targeted students are availing of them.

The quality of planning for improvement of transitions and retention was good overall. A successful transition programme for incoming first-year students was in place. Fifth and sixth-class students from feeder schools visited the school for activities such as art and science programmes, a summer camp and introduction mornings. First-year students had a designated area in the school with their own toilet and locker area. There was a taster programme for sampling optional subjects. A newly designed study skills programme to improve students' readiness for class had proved successful. Students in the focus group found all of these initiatives to be very good in helping them settle in to school.

DEIS planning for retention at senior cycle was effective. Transitions from junior to senior cycle were aided by talks given to third years and transition years regarding subject choice. While TY is optional, a concerted effort was made to encourage students to avail of it, with over 90% of students now do the TY programme. Subject departments had created videos outlining what their subject looked like at senior cycle. While this is good practice, feedback from students in the focus group was that they would also like to have more in-person input from subject teachers to help inform their subject choice. A planned series of talks, study skills, guest speakers and a very successful careers fair helped inform student choice for progressing beyond school.

Weekly year head and pastoral care team meetings, identified those at risk of leaving school. Together with the HSCL and SCP officers, the school worked effectively to encourage students to remain in school.

2.3 Partnership with parents and others

The quality of planning and implementation for improving partnership with parents and others was good overall. Very positive feedback was received from parents regarding feeling welcome in the school. A range of initiatives were in place to foster relationships with parents such as cookery and yoga classes for parents.

The HSCL and SCP officers worked very effectively with teachers and used key risk indicators to identify target families. The HSCL officer has used relevant training to empower parents and promote positive parenting. The SCP officer was in regular contact with a subset of the targeted family list. There was good communication with parents via the school app and parents were

sent text messages to notify them if their child is absent. There were very good links with others established through networks with the local community, local businesses and local further and higher education institutions. A recent drive to reconnect with past-pupils and invite them into the school was successful.

While many effective initiatives were in place, some aspects of DEIS planning for partnership with parents and others required improvement. The plan was not always up-to-date and did not reflect the full breadth of activities taking place. Setting and analysis of targets needs to be re-established. Monitoring of initiatives needs to be improved to see if they are positively impacting on targets set.

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	<i>Very good</i> 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 <i>outstanding</i> 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	<i>Good</i> 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	<i>Satisfactory</i> 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	<i>Fair</i> 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	<i>Weak</i> 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;