An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

DEIS EVALUATION

REPORT

School Name	St Joseph's Secondary School
School Address	Stanhope Street Off Manor Street Dublin 7
Roll number	60843Q

Date of Evaluation: 18-10-2019

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 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 did not meet the requirements in relation to 7 above and therefore was not fully compliant with the checks undertaken. However, the school has subsequently furnished evidence of compliance with these requirements.

DEIS Evaluation

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES

Dates of inspection	14-10-2019 to 18-10-2019
Inspection activities undertaken • 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	• 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 and relevant staff

SCHOOL CONTEXT

St Joseph's Secondary 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). It offers the Junior Cycle, an optional Transition Year (TY), Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) programme and the established Leaving Certificate. At the time of the evaluation there were 200 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:

• There is highly effective leadership of the DEIS planning process and excellent structures governing all aspects of school life.

• DEIS resources are used for their intended purposes.

• Some of the DEIS targets are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound (SMART), but there is a need for greater teacher ownership of the DEIS targets and the data underpinning them.

• The strategies to improve attendance and punctuality are excellent.

• Support for students with English as an additional language (EAL) needs is very good and good quality special educational needs (SEN) provision supports improvement well; some aspects of the organisation of the SEN provision require review.

• There is very good commitment to partnership with parents with recent use of social media to connect with parents proving particularly successful; the school is currently developing a parents' council.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

- All targets should be SMART and should focus on improvement in student outcomes for all DEIS themes.

- The DEIS targets should inform subject planning, and teaching and learning to a greater extent, and there should be deeper awareness of the data underpinning the targets amongst DEIS team and committee members.

- DEIS targets in key areas should be informed by input from the SEN department and underpinned by information in the student support files and continuity of provision should be prioritised in the organisation of team teaching in order to improve learner experience.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. DEIS ACTION PLANNING FOR IMPROVEMENT

There is very effective leadership of the DEIS planning process. There are three teachers on the core DEIS team. Their work is characterised by a commitment to delivering an inclusive and ambitious improvement plan for student wellbeing, development and learning. This work is carried out with enthusiasm, creativity and a willingness to deliver beyond what is expected.

There is a collaborative process involving all members of the school community for identifying areas for development and strategies for bringing about improvement. Individual team members demonstrated very good awareness of the targets relating to their own themes however a deeper awareness of the data underpinning the targets is needed. Further communication of the overall DEIS plan is required to ensure a whole-school approach and to enable all teachers to take ownership of all DEIS targets and actions for improvement.

There are excellent structures governing all areas of school life which are highly conducive to students' wellbeing and learning. The student behaviour and attendance management systems and the care team provide a framework that supports a compassionate, caring and calm school environment. Encouraging students to reach or exceed their potential is a feature of collective practice. Students in their focus group meeting reported that high expectations are maintained for achievement and this is strongly reflected in the analysis of student outcomes in certificate examinations.

The senior management team recognises the importance of DEIS planning in driving school improvement. Significant school resources are invested in the planning process; meeting time, posts of responsibility, teacher planning time, and extensive continuing professional development (CPD) provision. Additionally, the school has appointed a co-ordinator and manager of DEIS planning from within the senior management team.

For most themes, some of the targets set are SMART. However, other targets need to be reframed so that they are actual targets for improvement in student outcomes or parental engagement. Some targets refer to the outcomes for the overall cohort and the size of the cohort makes these targets less meaningful. A more individualised or categorised approach is necessary to ensure that the targets are realistic and that progress in achieving the targets is effectively measured.

Extensive teacher CPD has been provided both from outside agencies and through teachers sharing expertise. This approach provides a framework for supporting the implementation of the DEIS plan at classroom level. There is clear evidence of varied classroom activities improving outcomes for students through facilitating and encouraging engagement and participation in learning. While strategies are effectively implemented, collective use of DEIS targets to inform subject planning is not fully embedded. Subject planning should take full cognisance of all DEIS targets.

The school uses the resources provided by DEIS for their intended purpose. There is a homework club and after school study, that are well attended. The SCP interventions and HSCL resource are highly effective. The school maintains very good records of student participation in after-school and lunchtime activities. There is a breakfast club, and high quality nourishing lunches are provided for students. Future plans include the development of the library and the appointment of a librarian.

2. DEIS THEMES

2.1 Literacy and Numeracy
Literacy

The quality of the DEIS plan for literacy is good. There are six targets set; a few are SMART and others require refinement. The SEN provision in the school supports improvement in literacy and while it is mentioned as an action, it requires a higher profile and level of detail. A wide range of data sources inform provision but these are not fully reflected in the targets set. All of the available data should be used to set SMART targets for literacy at the *all*, *some* and *few* levels of the support continuum and to measure improvement at the review and monitoring stage of the DEIS planning process. This may need to be done on an individualised basis to reflect the diverse needs of the cohort.

The school population includes a significant proportion of students with EAL needs. Provision for such students is very good. Extensive EAL training has been provided to every teacher and there are a number of specialist-trained teachers on the staff. Services from external agencies are very well used to augment in-school provision. Additionally, excellent practice in relation to teachers providing in-class support for students with EAL was noted; extension of this practice would be highly beneficial.

Team-teaching is emerging as the main mode of delivery of SEN support. Good practice was noted in relation to team teaching; training has been provided and co-taught lessons are collaboratively planned by the teachers involved. However, for some class groups there needs to be better consistency in the creation of teams to ensure that the same teacher provides support across the week.

In addition to English provision, all junior cycle students are provided one period per week in the library. A book club initiative has recently been introduced to very good success. Students maintain a reading portfolio and are encouraged to read for pleasure. The vocabulary enrichment programme provides structured support. The library with all of the activities that take place in it, is effective in achieving key targets under the literacy DEIS theme. Student questionnaire responses around English and literacy were very positive.

Numeracy

Overall, target setting for numeracy requires improvement. Four numeracy targets are set. The best target is SMART and relates to uptake of higher-level Mathematics; the data shows very good achievement of this target. Three of the numeracy targets refer to actions aimed at the whole cohort. There is need to include a target at the *some* and *few* levels of the support continuum. Input from the SEN department and student support files should be further relied upon to create these DEIS targets. The use of student surveys and focus group meetings would enhance the evidence base for setting targets around attitudes to Mathematics and evaluating progress.

Implementation of DEIS strategies for improving numeracy is good. There is a whole-school approach to identifying opportunities for numeracy in lessons and adopting a consistent approach to numerical

operations. With the exception of team-teaching, the work of the SEN department in providing additional supports to students is not currently mentioned in the DEIS plan; this should be included as an important DEIS action.

Activities for students to experience Mathematics for fun are implemented at whole-school level. These measures are particularly important in light of the student questionnaire responses which indicate students finding the subject a challenge.

Examination attainment

The quality of DEIS planning for attainment is good. There are five targets outlined; three are targets and the others are worded more like actions for improvement. The targets measure improvement from year-to-year and the student numbers are too small to make this type of statistical analysis reliable. A more individualised approach using all of the relevant data on the students to whom the targets refer should be implemented. Furthermore, the alternative achievements that are now recognised in the JCPA should be included in the attainment targets as well as achievement in LCA.

The sample of subject plans reviewed included the DEIS planning document. The plans also referenced literacy and numeracy and included an analysis of student achievement. However, there was scope to include a section for teacher reflection on the results analysis. Subject-specific action plans, including attainment targets, should be developed to address issues identified in this reflection and to inform planning for improvement.

Active learning, characterised by very high levels of student engagement and participation, was noted in most lessons. The students were confident in discussions and demonstrated very good learning. They responded well to teacher questions and were enjoying their learning in the classroom. In a minority of lessons, where the methodology was more teacher-led, the students were passive. Students should be encouraged to take more responsibility for their own learning.

2.2 Attendance, Retention, Transitions
The strategies to promote good attendance and punctuality are excellent. Partial-day attendance was identified, through the DEIS planning process, as an issue and now students stay in for lunch. Additionally, a 'reflection room' where students who are late spend their lunch break, has been recently implemented. The data available shows significant improvement in punctuality and attendance.

The SCP provides very good support to students. Lunchtime and after school clubs are successful in making coming to school more attractive; a token system and prizes awarded provide further incentive for participation. The very well attended breakfast club is highly effective in encouraging students to be in on time.

Target setting for attendance is good but there is scope to have separate targets for the various levels of non-attendance in the school. An electronic attendance recording system has recently been introduced. To ensure accuracy of attendance data the roll is still being taken twice a day in hard copy.

The transition from primary to post-primary is very well managed by the HSCL, SEN co-ordination team, the principal and students. As part of the *Forbairt* teacher professional development programme, teachers visited the neighbouring feeder primary school to share methodologies and learning approaches used in sixth class; there is a plan to extend this very worthwhile practice.

Students transferring from other schools and their parents, reported highly successful transition systems and a very high level of satisfaction with the move.

Target setting for transitions requires improvement. The guidance department maintains high quality data on progression to further and higher education, and employment. This data should be more meaningfully reflected in the targets for transition. Data on the needs of students at other transition points should be used to set targets for transition from primary to post primary school and transfer from other schools. This will facilitate monitoring of progress in achieving the targets at the review stage of the planning process.

The targets for retention are SMART and inform a range of valuable strategies for improvement. Retention rates have improved and have gone from below average for DEIS schools to above average but retention remains an area for close attention.

The guidance provision supports the themes of retention and transitions very well. The school works hard to encourage students to stay in school to Leaving Certificate and access further and higher education. Supports are also provided for students choosing to enter the workplace. It was widely reported that students come back to access guidance support long after they leave school; that they feel they can access this ongoing support is a testament to the exceptional quality of the guidance and care provision in the school.

2.3 Partnership with parents and others
Great commitment to partnership with parents was evident in the evaluation. The targets set for partnership with parents, centre on improving attendance at parent-teacher meetings and increasing the participation of the targeted group of parents in school events. Social media has recently been used to very good effect in improving communication. Parent questionnaire responses shows a very high level of satisfaction with the school.

The school is developing a parents' council. The HSCL co-ordinator is new to the role and is establishing very good links with parents through home visits. There is a parents' room and a variety of courses for parents. There is a need to better align parent courses with parents' interests. The school is currently considering a DEIS committee which includes school personnel, members of the board of management, parents and students; this is an innovative and very worthwhile initiative.

There are very good links between the school and a broad range of local organisations. There is a high level of cooperation between the school and its feeder primary schools and also third-level institutions, and other agencies.

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, is pleased with the DEIS report and its findings.
The report confirms the excellent work that has taken place to improve our school. We will continue to seek improvement and act on the findings of the report.

'Further communication of the overall DEIS plan is required to ensure a whole-school approach and to enable all teachers to take ownership of all DEIS targets and actions for improvement'

The DEIS plan has been extensively communicated to all members of staff in the following ways:

- Through regular whole staff Croke park/DEIS sessions.
- Via VSWARE uploads.
  A hard copy placed in every subject department folder and in each DEIS   team folder.
- A hard copy placed in pigeon hole of each staff member.

We will continue to ensure and look for ways to improve upon our whole-school approach and to enable all teachers to take ownership of all DEIS targets and actions for improvement

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

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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;