



**An Roinn Oideachais**  
Department of Education

# **DEIS Evaluation**

## **Report**

### **REPORT**

School name	Scoil Mhuire
School address	Coolcotts Wexford
Roll number	19739N
Date of evaluation	11-05-2023
Date of issue of report	29/09/2023

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## 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 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.

## 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"><li>1. The name of the DLP and the Child Safeguarding Statement are prominently displayed near the main entrance to the school.</li><li>2. The Child Safeguarding Statement has been ratified by the board and includes an annual review and a risk assessment.</li><li>3. All teachers visited reported that they have read the Child Safeguarding Statement and that they are aware of their responsibilities as mandated persons.</li><li>4. The Child Safeguarding Statement meets the requirements of the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017.</li><li>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.</li></ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>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.</li><li>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.</li><li>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.</li><li>4. The school has appropriate initiatives in place to promote a positive and inclusive school culture and environment.</li><li>5. All teachers visited report that they have read the school's policy on anti-bullying</li></ol>

<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>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.</li><li>7. School planning documentation indicates that the school is making full provision for the relevant aspects of the curriculum (SPHE, Stay Safe, RSE).</li><li>8. Child protection records are maintained in a secure location.</li></ol>	<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.

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# DEIS Evaluation

<b>Date of inspection</b>	11-05-2023
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Interview with principal and relevant staff</li><li>• Examination of school's current action plans for improvement</li><li>• Observation of DEIS-related activities and interventions</li><li>• Pupil focus-group meeting</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Parent focus-group meeting</li><li>• Analysis of parent and pupil questionnaires</li><li>• Observation of teaching and learning</li><li>• Examination of pupils' work</li><li>• Interaction with pupils</li><li>• Feedback to principal and relevant staff</li></ul>

## School context

Scoil Mhuire, Coolcotts is a co-educational primary school in Wexford town. It operates under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Ferns. The school participates in Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS), the action plan of the Department of Education for educational inclusion and the School Completion Programme (SCP). It has the services of a full-time home-school-community-liaison (HSCL) coordinator. At the time of the evaluation, there were 602 pupils enrolled in the school.

## Summary of main findings and recommendations:

### Findings

- The overall quality of DEIS action planning for improvement in the school was very good; there was a strong connection between the culture of the school, the action planning process and classroom interventions.
- The quality of literacy planning and provision was very good; pupils were generally very competent at reading and writing across the genres.
- The quality of DEIS planning for numeracy was very good; pupils engaged enthusiastically in a number of worthwhile mathematical learning experiences and programmes.
- The overall quality of action planning for attendance, retention and transitions was outstanding; the school selected actions, which encouraged pupils to come to school, to stay in school and to foster a sense of belonging to the school.
- The quality of planning for partnership with parents and others was exemplary; the school had developed robust relationships with parents and relevant agencies in order to remove barriers and support pupils' access to school.
- The staff of the school, and in particular the principal, were commended for the very high levels of care and dedication shown to the pupils; staff were highly successful in providing supportive learning experiences for pupils.

### Recommendations

- In order to further support pupils' engagement in literacy and numeracy lessons, teachers should plan and provide tasks that are differentiated to meet the range of needs within classes. The role of the support teacher within these lessons should be further refined.

# Detailed findings and recommendations

## 1. DEIS action planning for improvement

The overall quality of DEIS action planning for improvement was very good. There was a strong connection between the stated culture of the school, the action planning process and agreed classroom practice. It was evident during the evaluation, that the principal and in-school management team promoted a culture of care of the pupils in the school. The DEIS action plan was used to meaningfully articulate and action this commitment to pupils in order to provide the best possible learning experiences for them.

The school had very effective structures in place to support the development of the DEIS plan. The school had identified priority areas for development. The plan outlined clear targets based on a range of relevant data, including the views of parents, pupils, teachers and a range of assessment information. The actions were closely linked to the targets. Considerable work had been done to streamline the plan and to support the consistent implementation of the plan across all the classes. Where targets and actions were most effective, they had been focussed on addressing the needs of specific groups of learners and the personnel involved in implementing the actions were clearly identified.

The school's management and use of DEIS resources to support the agreed strategies was highly effective. The building and grounds were maintained to a very high standard and positive affirmations and messages were displayed on the corridors.

Class teachers and learning support teachers were provided with time to plan collaboratively. Many of the literacy and numeracy DEIS targets had been addressed through in-class or team-teaching initiatives. In the best instances, support teachers had a clear purpose during the intervention and worked with identified groups of pupils on differentiated tasks. In other cases, their teaching role was less clearly defined during the initial part of the lesson. It is advised that the role of support teachers, within team teaching and in-class lessons be further explored and guidelines for practice be developed to support the implementation of a consistent approach across the school.

Teachers engaged in a wide range of relevant continuing professional development. The school's response to developing the digital skills of teachers was particularly noteworthy. The school had created an effective action plan to develop digital technology and began by examining potential gaps in teachers' own digital knowledge. The school then worked to support and develop teachers' skills in these specific areas. The impact of the plan and the associated professional development was evident in classroom practice. Pupils displayed high levels of confidence and competence in using computer programmes to support their learning.

The school had worked systematically to develop pupils' wellbeing. The school had created an action plan for wellbeing and the actions were linked to clear targets and identified groups. The school had actively sought to develop the voice of pupils. Senior pupils were provided with regular opportunities to represent their peers on various groups including the Amber Flag and playground leaders' committees. They had opportunities to discuss school events, develop leadership roles and have their opinions heard about upcoming plans for the school. During meetings with these groups, the pupils spoke with pride about their contribution to the school and the friendships they had formed through the committees.

## 2. DEIS themes

### 2.1 Literacy and numeracy

#### Literacy

DEIS planning for literacy was very good. The school had engaged in a very comprehensive analysis of standardised test results and teacher-designed tasks to establish baseline levels of pupil attainment. A comprehensive range of interventions, linked to targets was implemented throughout the school.

In survey responses, most pupils indicated that they were doing well at writing. Most pupils were very competent at writing across the genres. They knew the functions, associated language and structure of each genre. Samples of their work showed progress in their standard of writing over the years. Pupils could recall positive writing experiences and times when they wrote for a range of purposes. Digital tools were used to teach pupils how to edit, present and organise their writing.

The school had identified reading comprehension as a target for pupils in the DEIS plan. Pupils read at their instructional level and there was explicit teaching of comprehension strategies. In the senior classes, there was a focus on developing pupils' independence and ownership of the reading processes through reading groups.

The school used a number of evidence-based literacy programmes to support pupils' learning. Some teachers used the content of the various programmes to structure their lesson but the tasks, instruction and learning outcomes were differentiated and contextualised to take account of the needs within the class. In these cases, pupils attained the learning outcome of the lesson and progress in learning was evident. In some lessons, there was an over reliance on the programme and pupils were at times, disengaged or not sufficiently challenged. In order to enhance the impact of agreed actions, it is advised that all teachers plan and provide lessons, which are differentiated to meet the needs of the pupils.

## **Numeracy**

The quality of target setting for improvement in numeracy was very good. Targets in numeracy were based on strong evidence and were specific and meaningful. A number of actions had been identified to address targets. Where the actions were clearly written and progress focused, their impact could be clearly seen in classrooms and pupils' learning was enhanced. A small number of actions were based on gathering resources and it is advised that actions focus on changes to teaching practices that can be undertaken and monitored at whole-school level.

Pupils engaged enthusiastically in a range of worthwhile learning experiences in Mathematics. Chess groups, extension groups and coding were used to great effect to support pupils' creative experiences and lifelong skills in Mathematics. A Maths Recovery approach was used very successfully to support pupils' learning of number in the early years and special classes. In some highly effective lessons, teachers differentiated the content of the programme to provide learning experiences for pupils, at their own level. Many other lessons followed the course content, without considering the range of abilities within classes. In order to ensure that all pupils experience challenge and success in their learning, it is advised that all teachers plan and provide lessons, which are differentiated to meet the range of needs of the pupils.

## **2.2 Attendance, Retention, Transition**

The quality of the school's DEIS action-planning processes in the areas of attendance, retention and educational transitions was outstanding. The school management had identified targets and selected actions, which encouraged pupils to come to school, to want to stay in school and to foster a sense of belonging to the school and wider community. The impact of the school's efforts was noted in the good attendance and punctuality rates of almost all pupils. In parents' questionnaires, almost all parents indicated that they expect their child to fully complete their secondary education.

The plan for retention, attendance and transitions and associated actions was focused on promoting inclusion and meeting pupils' needs. In terms of attendance, the management team liaised very effectively to monitor and promote good attendance levels. The school had developed very effective systems for recording and communicating pupils' attendance.

The school selected co and extra-curricular activities to encourage pupils' retention in school. Lessons were used to develop pupils' interests, which could be sustained outside of school, and after they had finished in the school. They also prioritised pupils' involvement in activities with a strong link to the community and they helped pupils to meet and make connections with local

people and key agencies. Pupils were observed playing in a school band and practising for a school musical and they performed with confidence and to a very high standard. Pupils discussed the experience of bringing a performance to the stage and the amount of effort it took to develop their musical and dramatic skills to presentation level. Their persistence and pride in this work was noted. Considerable attention was given by the management team to supporting pupils effectively as they moved from pre-school into primary and onto second level education. The school used transition programmes, targeted support for parents and well-established communication links with feeder schools to develop pupils' sense of belonging.

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

The quality of DEIS planning for developing partnership with parents and others was outstanding. The school had developed a meaningful plan to sustain and develop relationships with parents and relevant agencies. Targets and actions in the DEIS plan focused on removing barriers for pupils' engagement with school and education. The plan detailed a number of interwoven strategies, which followed the continuum of support model with some of the strategies being universal, some targeted to support certain cohorts of pupils at a specific age, stage or situation. Parents were encouraged to become involved in the school, to build connections within the community and to access relevant agencies. Many parents actively participated in the Parents' Book Club organised by the school. Parents, during the focus group, expressed their satisfaction with the openness of the teachers and the principal. They reported their appreciation of the care and attention given to their children. They noted that each pupil was welcomed, by name on the yard each morning by the principal. Parents were actively involved in many aspects of school-life including extra and co-curricular activities and they reported that they always felt welcome in the school. An active parents' association supported the work of the school and provided information to parents.

Strong links between the school and external partners were deeply embedded into the culture of the school. Some of these well-established links were with local sporting clubs such as Wexford Gymnastics Club, cultural organisations such as Music Generation Wexford along with parish and community services. As part of the School Excellence Fund, the school worked with two preschools. The school planned to sustain their agreed initiatives beyond the formal life time of the project in order to further support pupils' transitions. Management had ensured that partnerships with agencies were formed and co-ordinated, to maximise the potential positive impact of each initiative on the pupils' overall access to education and learning.

The principal was a highly effective leader. She, along with the management team worked tirelessly to advocate for pupils and to support their inclusion and participation in school and in the community. The staff of the school, and in particular the principal, were commended for the very high levels of care and dedication shown to the pupils in the school. There was significant evidence that the school was highly successful in providing supportive learning experiences and positive learning outcomes for all pupils.

## 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;



# **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 of Scoil Mhuire, Coolcotts welcomes the DEIS Evaluation Report, in particular the finding that the overall quality of DEIS action planning for improvement was very good, with a strong connection between school culture, the action planning process, and classroom interventions.

The Board warmly welcomes the following acknowledgements:

- The school had worked systematically to develop pupils' wellbeing and the voice of pupils. The pupils spoke with pride about their contribution to the school.
- The quality of planning for literacy and numeracy was very good; pupils were generally very competent at reading and writing and they engaged enthusiastically in a number of worthwhile mathematical learning experiences.
- The overall quality of action planning for attendance, retention and transitions was outstanding, fostering a sense of belonging and pupils' persistence and pride in their work.
- Planning for partnership with parents and others was exemplary. Parents reported that they always felt welcome in the school and robust relationships were in place to remove barriers and support pupils' access to school.
- The staff of the school, and in particular the principal, were commended for the very high levels of care shown to pupils.
- Staff were highly successful in providing supportive learning experiences and positive learning outcomes for all pupils.

## **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 Board of Management of Scoil Mhuire, Coolcotts welcomes the recommendation that in order to further support pupils' engagement in literacy and numeracy lessons, teachers should plan and provide tasks that are differentiated to meet the range of needs within classes, including further refinement of the role of the support teacher within these lessons.

The DEIS Evaluation Report acknowledges that where literacy tasks, instruction and learning outcomes were differentiated and contextualised to take account of the needs within the class, pupils attained the learning outcome of the lesson and progress in learning was evident. In highly effective lessons observed in numeracy, teachers differentiated the content to provide learning experiences for pupils at their own level.

In order to build on these identified strengths, the staff team has commenced a robust review of our school's current approaches to differentiation in literacy and numeracy, including the utilisation of team teaching and in-class support to achieve the desired learning outcomes for our diversity of pupils. This review is also interrogating key evidence-based learning from external sources, including Oide, NCSE, NEPS and DEIS partner schools. Staff sharing of existing good practice and accessing of seminal continuing professional development will inform and direct future DEIS action planning for improvement, schoolwide classroom practice in literacy and numeracy, and the realisation of a consistent approach across the school.

The Board of Management is confident that the aforementioned measures will serve to further support pupils' engagement in literacy and numeracy lessons, to respond to their range of abilities and learning needs and ultimately, to improve learning outcomes for them.

