

# **DEIS Advisory Group Meeting Note**

**28<sup>th</sup> May 2019 Clock Tower, Marlborough Street.**

## **1. Context for DEIS Advisory Group**

DEIS – Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools, is the Department’s main policy initiative aimed at tackling educational disadvantage in primary and post primary schools and DEIS Plan 2017, launched in February 2017, sets out the vision for future interventions in the critical area of educational disadvantage policy. It builds on what has already been achieved by schools who have benefitted from the additional supports available under the initial DEIS programme introduced in 2005.

The two key elements of the 2017 Plan are:

- The development of a new identification process for the assessment of schools in terms of the socio-economic background of their pupil cohort using centrally held data including the Departments Primary and Post-Primary Online Databases and the CSO Small Area of Population statistics from the National Census of Population 2011 as represented by the Pobal HP Deprivation Index
- The updating of the DEIS School Support Programme which represents the overall ‘package’ of supports available to schools participating in the programme in order to improve educational outcomes for pupils at greatest risk of not reaching their full potential by virtue of their socio-economic circumstances.

## **2. Terms of Reference DEIS Advisory Group**

The Terms of Reference for the DEIS Advisory Group are as follows:

- To progress the implementation of DEIS Plan 2017.
- To provide advice on the implementation of Actions under the Plan in particular :
  - Identify enablers and/or barriers to implementation.
  - Draw attention to difficulties that would be likely to impact implementation or timelines.
  - Seek explanations where implementation is delayed/likely to fail.
  - Advise on potential solutions for failed/delayed implementation.
- To provide and receive updates to/from the Programme Steering Committee.
- To establish Working Groups in areas which require further research as set out in DEIS Plan 2017 and/or areas that emerge that shows further research is required.

- To examine and make recommendations based on reports produced by the Working Groups to the Programme Steering Committee.
- To provide advice on the establishment of a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework.

## **Representation at the Advisory Group**

32 attendees including DES Officials, officials from other Government Departments, the Educational Research Centre, Teacher Unions and School Management Bodies.

## **Format of the Advisory Group Meeting.**

Mary Cregg, Principal Officer, Social Inclusion Unit, opened the meeting with a presentation on the implementation of DEIS Plan 2017 and an update on the DEIS Identification Process.

Four Questions were then presented to the attendees for consideration and discussion. The main issues raised by attendees on the day is summarised below.

***Q1. The HP Deprivation Index has three dimensions: Demographic Profile; Social Class Composition: Labour Market Situation. The following indicators are taken from the Census to form the HP Index - % unemployment (male & female), semi and unskilled classes, lone parents, persons per room, professional classes, third level education, primary education only, population change and age dependency rate.***

***Some concerns have been expressed that the use of the HP index does not fully reflect all of those at risk of educational disadvantage. For example children experiencing homelessness have been referenced as needing to be accounted for in some way. What other indicators of socio-economic disadvantage / predictors of educational disadvantage should be considered and how could they be measured?***

- Move to data based identification model largely welcomed.
- From a school's perspective the HP Index doesn't capture variables such as drug use, mental health, feuding, crime, pupils living in rented accommodation in relative affluent areas, homelessness. What does it capture and more importantly, what does it not capture?
- Further communication required on HP Index.
- How do we ensure HP Index is kept up to date?

***Q2. How can policy makers support schools in the effective implementation of DEIS to tackle educational disadvantage?***

- DEIS Specific training will assist in the most effective use of resources. Effective CPD needs to happen in school with support and resources from the Department
- Making and building professional learning communities.
- The various initiatives take time to plan and implement. Some attendees expressed the concern that DEIS Schools are under severe time pressure and suggested an additional two DEIS planning days per year.
- Incentivise teachers by adequately resourcing schools, build capacity and affirm good work
- Access to external supports – Tusla, CAMHS etc.

***Q3. What supports are key to tackling educational disadvantage and are there other supports that should be considered?***

- Leadership is more important than resources.
- Capacity of schools to engage with other schools.
- Access to external supports and school awareness of what supports are available– e.g. mental health, wellbeing.
- Parental engagement is very important to raise aspirations.
- Guidance councillors
- Teacher training – NCSE, Junior Cert.
- Student voice needs to be heard.
- Data analysis.
- Level the playing field – other opportunities, additional supports and programmes are required e.g. revision courses, grinds, and homework clubs.
- Meet the basic needs – breakfast clubs, hot school meals.
- Enhanced access to third level links – present third level as an attainable opportunity. Access Programmes
- More could be done at ITE to prepare teachers for teaching in DEIS schools. Teachers new to DEIS schools may require some specific CPD.

**Junior Cycle Reform – New Junior Cycle**

- Teachers are concerned certain aspects of the Junior Cycle will further disadvantage students.
- Evidence from a number of schools however contradicts this.

**Class size**

- The relationship between teacher and pupil is crucial and there was a renewed call for lower class size in those schools dealing with the highest concentrations of disadvantage.

***Q4. In terms of the development of the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for the DEIS programme, what areas should be prioritised and why?***

- Class size / teacher allocation – high turnover of principals. There should be a second deputy principal in all DEIS schools.
- Strong leadership with a deep understanding of disadvantage is vital and the suitable induction/training for a school leader is critical.
- What is the best use of HSCL time given their key role with parents?
- Mapping of what is available – schools may not be aware of the supports available to them. Would give them capacity to engage with local projects, networks on a practical level.
- Attendance is an issue both in DEIS and non-DEIS schools – how attendance is impacting on attainment.
- Parental engagement and raising their aspirations. More research required on empowering parents.
- Student voices should be taken into account.
- Is the DES targeting the right schools? How do we evaluate this?
- New resource allocation model – concept of tapering resources on a sliding scale.
- How do we compare the progress of students: DEIS with DEIS; DEIS with non-DEIS?
- Student Achievement is not the only measure. Schools focus on holistic development and overall Emotional wellbeing so outcome measures based on student achievement do not necessarily capture the full picture. Share what works within the sector.
- Disciplinary issues in schools. Behaviour cited as a big issue both in primary and post primary schools
- Need longitudinal research to track where students from DEIS schools progress to.