An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

DEIS EVALUATION

REPORT

School Name	Holy Spirit Junior Primary School
School Address	Limekiln Lane, Greenhills, Dublin 12.
Roll number	20463F

Date of Evaluation: 13-12-2019

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 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.

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 met the requirements in relation to each of the checks above.

DEIS Evaluation

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES

Date of inspection	13-12-2019
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	• Parent focus-group interview • Analysis of parent questionnaires • Observation of teaching and learning • Examination of pupils' work • Interaction with pupils • Feedback to principal, chairperson of the board of management and relevant staff

SCHOOL CONTEXT

Holy Spirit Junior Primary School was established in 2015 following the amalgamation of St. Paul's Junior School, St. Paul's Girls National School and St. Peter's Boys National School. The school has participated in Band I of the DEIS action plan since 2017. It has the services of a full-time home school community liaison (HSCL) co-ordinator and participates in the School Completion Programme (SCP). At the time of the evaluation there were 252 pupils enrolled in the school. Enrolment numbers have decreased slightly over the last three years. The current three-year DEIS plan addresses the period from 2017 to 2020.

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:

- The quality of leadership of DEIS action planning for improvement is very good; the principal has demonstrated the capacity to manage changes in context in a collaborative and sensitive manner and to bring about improvement.
- The DEIS action plan for improvement includes a variety of good quality initiatives and strategies that are clearly linked to the areas for improvement in each theme; many of the initiatives are not guided by specific, measurable and achievable targets.
- The quality of teaching and learning in literacy and numeracy is good, with some highly commendable practice.
- The teachers in all settings have compiled useful assessment information on pupils' learning and achievements; there is a need to optimise the use of this information to progress pupils' learning.
- Teams have been developed to work on each DEIS theme and members have accrued very good expertise through continuing professional development (CPD); there is potential to extend this knowledge.
- The school is highly commended on its very positive partnership with parents and others; the parents hold the principal, HSCL co-ordinator and teachers in high regard and are very appreciative of the support they and their children receive.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

- DEIS targets should be stated in specific, measurable and achievable terms and the school self-evaluation (SSE) process should be used to identify the teaching and learning practices that will support the identified targets and actions for improvement.
- Class teachers should analyse and use school assessment data more efficiently to inform plans and programmes of learning to support and challenge pupils as appropriate, and to track their progression.
- To build on the work to date, there is a need to provide more regular opportunities for the sharing of expertise among teachers regarding the implementation of DEIS initiatives and the specific DEIS pupil cohort.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. DEIS ACTION PLANNING FOR IMPROVEMENT

- The quality of leadership of DEIS action planning for improvement is very good; the principal, with the support of school staff, has demonstrated the capacity to manage changes in context in a highly collaborative and sensitive manner and to bring about improvement. The principal has used the domains and standards from *Looking at Our School 2016, A Quality Framework for Primary Schools* in the development of leadership and collaboration in provision for pupils. In the spirit of distributed leadership, teams have been formed to work on each DEIS theme and members have accrued very good expertise through CPD. To build on this good practice, there is a need to more regularly share this expertise with all teachers and to augment their awareness of the specific DEIS pupil cohort.

- The DEIS action plan is in the final year of its first three-year cycle. The plan identifies targets and initiatives for each of the DEIS themes. The co-ordinators are highly committed and have organised a variety of good quality initiatives that are clearly linked to the identified areas for improvement. The focus on constructive collaborative planning at each class level and the strong sense of teamwork support a whole-school awareness and implementation of the agreed initiatives and strategies. There is evidence that the DEIS planning process is making a positive impact on teaching and learning, overall. In line with good practice, the impact of the improvement plans are measured through the use of assessment information gathered before and after the implementation of most of these initiatives. Many of the identified areas for improvement are not currently guided by specific, measurable and achievable targets in the DEIS plan. The impact of this work would be more focused and more readily monitored and evaluated if the DEIS targets were stated in measurable terms. In addition, the use of the SSE process will help the school to identify the teaching and learning practices for each class level that will support the targets and actions for improvement.

- The school has a very good range of purposeful literacy and numeracy resources to support teaching and learning. The school staff has cultivated a very caring, welcoming and supportive environment with stimulating seasonal displays and celebrations of the pupils' work. The staff

supports the promotion of pupils' wellbeing through the provision of courses, such as the Incredible Years programme, and the work of the school's pastoral care team. The work of the HSCL and SCP co-ordinators is highly effective in supporting the school to progress improvements across the DEIS themes.

2. DEIS THEMES

2.1 Literacy and Numeracy

Literacy

- The quality of planning for improvement in literacy is good. The literacy plan aims to improve the attainment of pupils' oral language skills, in particular their acquisition and use of language and their ability to demonstrate understanding. The targets were formulated following a survey of teachers and a comprehensive analysis of school assessment data. While specific targets for reading have not been formulated, this area has also been identified for improvement. A range of praiseworthy whole-school approaches and specific interventions is being implemented. These include the use of an incremental oral language programme, guided reading and the *Reading Recovery* programme. Examples of highly effective teaching and learning in the promotion of children's oral language skills were observed. A graded reading scheme is used to ensure that there is a good balance between confidence and challenge for pupils and their enjoyment of reading is also encouraged through visits to the newly-refurbished school library. Teachers of pupils in second class are currently piloting a programme to support pupils' comprehension skills and plan to extend this approach across all classes. As well as supporting the individual needs of children, the special education needs (SEN) teachers work with class teachers to address the needs of groups of children using key elements of the *Reading Recovery* Programme. Teachers regularly record pupils' oral language attainment and their reading levels and there is evidence that learning outcomes for pupils are improving. There is a need to optimise the use of this assessment data to inform the planned next steps in the pupils' learning and their progression. In reviewing the DEIS plan for literacy, targets need to be devised for reading and to address other aspects of literacy, such as writing.

Numeracy

- The overall quality of DEIS planning for numeracy is good. Following a survey of teachers, number was identified as the focus of this plan for improvement in numeracy. This plan is in the early stages of implementation. Although the plan provides guidance on initiatives and strategies to be implemented, measurable targets have not been set to quantify desired improvements in pupils' attainment in number. The school implements a range of initiatives to support pupils' numeracy skills, including *Maths Recovery* and elements of *Ready Set Go Maths*. An analysis of the initial assessment findings of the impact of these initiatives indicates that there is some improvement in pupils' achievements in number. During lessons, pupils are encouraged and supported in their knowledge of number and oral Mathematics. Commendable emphasis is placed on the linkage of concepts with real-life situations and the provision of collaborative and active learning methodologies for pupils. Good and very good classroom practice and pupil engagement levels and understanding were observed. Throughout the school there is a praiseworthy emphasis on mathematical initiatives, such as *Maths Eyes*. Classes are well equipped with concrete materials and manipulatives to support the teaching of Mathematics. The school is involved in the O'Brien Trust and has received support in the provision of resources. Members of the numeracy team

have built up a high level of expertise in support teaching for numeracy. As part of a pilot project for in-class support led by the SEN team, *Maths Recovery* methodologies are employed to guide teaching and learning and praiseworthy work is underway. Team-teaching lessons are structured carefully to provide for specific small group instruction while also providing opportunities for pupils to practise their new knowledge independently. Opportunities are provided for pupils to engage in lateral thinking, reasoning, deducing and the creation of definitions and rules from their learning. Differentiation to meet the range of pupils' ability levels in the area of number in these classes is very well managed. Such very good practice is worthy of further extension to all classes. Throughout the school, teachers record pupils' progress in numeracy through use of criterion-referenced assessment. Further analysis of these assessment records is advised to inform the extension of differentiated practices to cater for the varying needs of pupils.

2.2 Attendance, Retention, Transitions

- The quality of planning for attendance and transitions is very good. Specific whole-school targets for improving overall attendance and decreasing the number of pupils absent for more than twenty days each year are detailed in the DEIS plan. The school maintains records of attendance and good attendance is encouraged through a rewards system. The HSCL co-ordinator oversees the monitoring of pupil attendance and maintains regular contact with the parents of children who regularly miss school. The overall pupil attendance rates and the number of chronic non-attenders have improved. There remains a significant minority of pupils who miss more than twenty days per year. Strategies, including 'Every School Day counts' during November's attendance awareness month, have been put in place to target improvements in the attendance of these pupils. The school plans to introduce a breakfast club and this development is welcomed. In the parent questionnaires, a majority of parents felt that a breakfast club was a good idea. In reviewing the DEIS plan, the identification of more specific targets for particular cohorts of pupils should now be established.

- The quality of transitions from early-years settings and from the junior to the senior school is very good. Very good links are in place with feeder early-years settings. The principal, teachers and HSCL co-ordinator visit early-years settings. To ensure continuity of learning experience for pupils as they transition to primary school, plans are in place to use the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment's (NCCA) *Mo Scéal* documents in collaboration with the early-years settings. Most pupils progress to Holy Spirit Senior Primary School. The principal, SEN team, teachers, HSCL co-ordinator and SCP co-ordinator have developed a well-managed, structured approach to the transition to the senior school. This transition is tailored to the individual needs of pupils. Parents were very positive about the level of support their children receive when moving.

- The quality of planning for retention of pupils is good. Targets and strategies have been identified to ensure that pupils are supported to remain within the educational system. There is a need to develop more measurable targets for this theme. While almost all children transfer to the adjacent senior primary school, a system for tracking pupils who do not transfer should be consistently implemented. The SCP co-ordinator liaises effectively with the HSCL co-ordinator and facilitates targeted, time-bound interventions for pupils to support their attendance and retention.

2.3 Partnership with parents and others

- The quality of partnership with parents and others is very good. The parents hold the principal, HSCL co-ordinator and teachers in high regard and are very appreciative of the support they and their children receive. In the parent questionnaires, almost all parents agreed that the school is a welcoming place. A meeting with a focus group of parents also revealed very positive attitudes towards the school. Parents feel that school personnel listen to them and are proactive in working in collaboration with them to support their children. Parents assist in the work of the school curricular initiatives, such as Maths for Fun. There is a very good range of initiatives to encourage parental involvement in the school community. High quality initiatives observed during the evaluation included a workshop for 'Helping my child to read', a parent and toddler group and a cookery course for parents. The three HSCL and the SCP co-ordinators in the DEIS cluster work very effectively together to support parental involvement. Currently, while parents are very visible in the school, they do not have a dedicated parents' room. Plans are being progressed to provide a parents' room as a matter of priority. While highly effective initiatives are being implemented to support increased parental involvement, clear and measurable targets have not been set. In reviewing the DEIS plan, the school should devise measurable targets for this area.

- The principal has a clear vision for building a cohesive community and has been proactive in engaging with local organisations, including parish and community centres. Meaningful links have also been progressed with outside agencies and support services, including the National Educational Psychological Service, National Council for Special Education, Health Service Executive, Barnardos and other community organisations, to help provide supports for pupils.

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 and Staff welcome this very positive DEIS Evaluation Report, which affirms the high standards of teaching and learning in Holy Spirit Junior Primary School. We are very happy with the manner in which the report recognises the professional practices, dedication and commitment of the School Staff, Board of Management and Parents' Association.

We appreciate the report's recognition of the highly collaborative practices and capacity of the school community to make improvements, particularly in the context of the challenges associated with the establishment of our amalgamated school in 2015.

The Board of Management and Staff are reassured by the school's compliance with: *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post –Primary Schools 2017.*

We are particularly pleased that the report acknowledges the school's culture as one, which creates an environment of care, welcome and support and one, which celebrates pupils' work, promotes pupils' well-being and creates a very positive attitude among parents and others towards the school.

The Board of Management and Staff undertake to implement the recommendations contained within the report so as to build on our achievements and to further improve our school as a place of learning for all.

Part B 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 and Staff welcome and view as timely the recent DEIS Evaluation process and recommendations. The recommendations offer very clear and specific guidance pertinent to our school context as we begin our DEIS Action Plan for 2020-2023.

We commit to building on our spirit of distributed leadership and our very good expertise on each DEIS theme so as to continue to share and augment the awareness among all staff of specific pupil cohorts.

The Board of Management and Staff will continue their commitment to the organisation of quality initiatives, collaborative planning and teamwork at each class level. The school will set specific, measurable and achievable targets. We will use the school self-evaluation process, as recommended in the report, to identify the teaching and learning practices, which will support targets and actions identified. The use of the SSE process in the school will ensure optimal assessment 'for learning' as well as assessment 'of learning'.

We will devise targets for reading and writing when reviewing the DEIS plan for literacy. We will also set measurable targets to quantify desired improvements in pupils' attainment in number and we will further analyse assessment records to inform the extension of differentiated practices.

The Board of Management and Staff welcome the report's recognition of the school's well-managed, structured approach to the transition of pupils to Holy Spirit Senior Primary School. We will continue our very good planning and monitoring of attendance and, as recommended, identify specific targets for particular cohorts of pupils. We will also identify measurable targets for retention and we will

create measurable targets to consolidate our already very commendable partnership with parents and others.

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;

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