An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

DEIS EVALUATION

REPORT

School Name	Ramsgrange Community School
School Address	Ramsgrange New Ross Co Wexford
Roll number	91431Q

Date of Evaluation: 23-11-2016

Date of issue of report:

AN ROINN OIDEACHAIS AGUS SCILEANNA | DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SKILLS

WHAT IS A DEIS EVALUATION?

In 2005 the Department published *DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools): An Action Plan for Educational Inclusion*. The aim of this action plan is to ensure that the educational needs of children and young people from disadvantaged communities are met.

Schools are expected to develop action plans for improvement in the following areas (referred to as the DEIS themes): attendance; retention; educational progression; examination attainment; literacy; numeracy; partnership with parents; partnership with other schools and educational providers, and with external agencies. 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.

DEIS Evaluation

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES DURING THIS INSPECTION

Date of inspection	23-11-2016
Inspection activities undertaken • Discussion with staff • Examination of action plan for improvement • Observation of DEIS-related activities and interventions	• Parent focus-group interview • Analysis of parent and student questionnaires • Observation of teaching and learning • Examination of students' work • Interaction with students • Feedback to DEIS planning team

SCHOOL CONTEXT

Ramsgrange Community School has the services of a full-time home school community liaison (HSCL) coordinator and participates in the School Completion Programme (SCP). It provides the Junior Certificate, Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP), Transition Year (TY), Leaving Certificate and Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) programmes. There are 404 students enrolled.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

The key findings arising from this evaluation are the following:

- Senior management is actively promoting a culture of planning for improvement that supports equality of opportunity for all.
- The quality of DEIS action planning is good; many valuable targets and actions that support students are in place in all themes.
- Personnel with specific DEIS-related roles have a full understanding of their responsibilities in attaining targets.
- There is scope to enhance the whole-school basis on which the targets are selected and reviewed and to embed DEIS action planning as a way of working among the whole staff.
- At the time of the evaluation, the school was not responding quickly enough to the data for absenteeism.
- The quality of planning, monitoring and outcomes for the themes of retention, progression and partnership is very good.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The key recommendations arising from this evaluation are the following:

- Senior management should promote the DEIS plan as a working document to be implemented by all teachers and place DEIS planning on the agenda of every staff meeting.
- Much earlier intervention is necessary for those students with a high number of absences.
- Within the themes of attainment, literacy and numeracy, there is scope to increase the whole-school targets and actions to be implemented by all teachers in daily classroom practice.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. DEIS ACTION PLANNING FOR IMPROVEMENT

- The quality of the leadership and the coherence of the action planning process is good. Senior management actively promotes a culture of improvement that supports equality of opportunity.
- In the current plan (2015-2018), the process for target setting is good and is based on analysing relevant data and identifying priorities for improvement. Targets are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound (SMART) and are periodically adjusted according to evidence accrued.
- The DEIS planning team has selected suitable actions to achieve the targets for identified students. Good school structures are in place to co-ordinate interventions. Personnel with specific DEIS-related roles have a full understanding of their responsibilities in attaining the targets and working towards bringing about equality of opportunity.
- Monitoring and evaluation of progress with the target groups takes place at student-support level and through senior management. Processes in place to monitor and measure the impact of agreed actions are generally reliable and there is evidence of good progress in some areas.
- There is scope to enhance the whole-school basis on which the targets are selected and reviewed and to embed DEIS action planning as a way of working among the whole staff. DEIS action planning should be on the agenda of every staff meeting and the staff should discuss implementation and progress of each theme in turn. Awareness of the identity of all target groups could be enhanced.
- Recent whole-school focus on consistency in relation to homework and classroom routines, conducted in conjunction with the National Behaviour Support Service (NBSS), has led to improvements in students' attitudes to learning. A similar focus on embedding agreed actions for numeracy, literacy and attainment could further enhance outcomes for learners.
- DEIS resources are used effectively and efficiently to support the actions selected. The school is using resources well and has made productive partnership with parents and the community. However, there is some scope to review the use of learning support and resource allocations and the use of team teaching.
- Confirmation was provided that the board of management has formally adopted the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-primary Schools (2011)* without modification and that the school is compliant with the requirements of the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (2011)*.

2. DEIS THEMES

2.1. Literacy, Numeracy, Attainment

- The overall quality of planning for improvement and the quality of implementation and outcomes for literacy and numeracy range from satisfactory to good.
- Four targets have been set to improve literacy. Progress with two of the targets, to promote reading for pleasure and to improve confidence in reading and speaking aloud in classes, is good. Selected actions to meet these targets are becoming increasingly whole-school and there was evidence that this is having an impact on students' outcomes. This whole-school approach to implementation should be extended wherever possible. In the main, however, the targets and measures to improve literacy are linked to learning support and the English department. A greater number of whole-school literacy strategies, to be implemented in daily teaching and learning in all subjects, should be developed. Progress has yet to be made with the target to increase the uptake of higher-level English.

- The chief action contained in the literacy theme for implementation by all teachers is to teach key words in subjects. A more cohesive key-word initiative is recommended, where students are given opportunities to extend, embed and enrich their general vocabulary as well as subject-specific vocabulary.
- There is a range of good actions to promote reading for pleasure including 'drop everything and read', paired reading and the access to good books and periodicals. It is positive that two-thirds of parents said that the school encourages their child to read at home.
- Good targets have been set for numeracy. The targets are measurable; baseline data was gathered from a number of sources including surveys. Some good actions are in place and a numeracy environment is evident. Maths-for-Fun and the extra-curricular activities such as Minecraft and coding contribute to numeracy development.
- Good progress has been measured in two numeracy initiatives: to improve ability to gather and interpret data and to convert fractions to percentages. Progress has yet to be made with the target to increase the uptake of higher-level Mathematics. The plan to introduce retesting for numeracy is welcomed and should help to further monitor progress.
- Actions to meet the target to improve visual awareness of percentages were observed but actions to promote the use of basic numeracy terminology or numeracy moments were not observed in the lessons visited other than Maths lessons. Participation in numeracy-link teacher training would further support whole-school numeracy and it is timely to review both implementation and impact at whole-staff level. In a very small number of Mathematics classes, class size could be reduced by maximising the teacher resource.
- Five SMART targets have been set to improve attainment. Action planning in this theme is a relatively new area of focus and a work in progress. Emergent and good actions include tracking student attainment, issuing 'effort marks' and plans to use test-retest with specific assessment instruments.
- The recently-developed attainment tracking system, which avails of valuable data from baselines established on entry through to ongoing performance in tests, is being trialled. Established actions, reported as having a positive impact, include promoting good homework routines, focusing on study plans and goal-setting, implementing the change-of-level policy and talking to students about their test results and how to improve their work. Positively, a discrete cohort of students is targeted for higher-level attainment.
- The involvement of teachers in professional development was reported as having an impact on the extension of formative assessment. Further discussions on whole-school use of assessment for learning in daily classroom practices and on raising expectations warrant consideration.

2.2. **Attendance, Retention, Progression**

- The targets set and the actions in place to improve and encourage attendance are generally good, although some possibilities for improvement exist. Implementation is enabled by six-weekly student-support meetings. Home visits, communication with parents, well-selected lunchtime activities for target groups, student rewards and the breakfast and homework club support attendance and punctuality. Recording of attendance is reliably carried out. Daily texts inform parents of student absence in a timely manner.
- Notwithstanding the very good work in responding to the needs of individual students and their families and the positive nature of the communication, the actions to improve attendance are not changing quickly enough in response to the evidence in data. Collated absences are produced every six weeks; this interval is too long. A structured follow-up on weekly data is required as the overall attendance rate is not improving and, last year, there was an increase in those with over

twenty days absences. Earlier intervention is necessary, primarily for those who accumulate five days, and subsequently for those who reach ten, fifteen and twenty days. There is scope to enhance parents' awareness of what a lot of absences is.

- The quality of planning, implementation and monitoring for retention is very good. Successful actions include the JCSP, student-support teams, home visitation, positive affirmation and a well-structured LCA. Other proactive approaches develop social and emotional skills, academic and literacy skills and positive health with targeted students exhibiting indicators that present potential barriers to retention. SCP supports including re-tracking and setting targets have good impact. The link with the NBSS stimulated a culture that actively promotes positive behaviour and a refocused school vision. Well-established classroom routines contribute to orderliness. Students and parents met with during the evaluation expressed universal confidence in their school. Commendably, the number of suspensions has reduced significantly.
- The overall quality of action planning, implementation and monitoring for progression is very good. Targets are realistic and, commendably, focus on improving expectations for students and parents. The guidance service endeavours to broaden horizons through encouragement to consider further studies outside the locality, and works with parents to plan for progression. College awareness week, college visits and the access programmes impact positively. Novel initiatives involve TY students making presentations to junior years on progression options and scheduling the information evening on college application with the sixth-year parent-teacher meeting (PTM). A high proportion of parents responded that it is likely that their child will go to college or further education and training.
- The processes in place to monitor and evaluate the impact of agreed actions for progression are reliable and effective. Progress, including parental attitudinal survey and feedback, is reflected on annually and changes made as necessary.

2.3. **Partnership with parents and others**

- The overall quality of planning to promote partnership with parents and others, and the links forged, are highly effective. Valuable resources available in the parent body and the neighbouring community are tapped into.
- Senior management actively promotes parental involvement. Through the highly commended facilitation of the HSCL, a committed Parent Volunteer Group helps with initiatives including gardening, photography and paired literacy and numeracy. Almost all parents engage with the HSCL either through a home visit or meeting; parents reported positively on the impact of this. The school runs courses for parents and there is a high level of awareness of these. Very good use is made of social media to promote partnership. Productive links have been forged with local primary schools and a range of local businesses.
- The processes in place to evaluate the impact of actions for the partnership theme are reliable and effective. Progress, including survey, feedback and participation rates at PTMs, is reflected on annually and changes are made to the action plan as necessary.

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 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' 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' 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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