An Roinn Oideachais agus Óige
Department of Education and Youth

Evaluation of learning and planning for improvement - DEIS

REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	Scoil Mhuire
Seoladh na scoile/School address	Kilcruttin Tullamore Co. Offaly
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	18057F
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	24/11/2025
Dáta eisiúna na tuairisce/Date of issue of report	30/01/2026

Introduction to the evaluation

The DEIS Programme

The Department of Education and Youth provides a wide range of supports to all schools to promote the inclusion of all children and young people. The Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) programme supplements these universal supports by providing additional resources to identified schools to further assist them reduce barriers that prevent children and young people reaching their potential. The overall aim of the DEIS programme is to ensure improved learning outcomes for children and young people in schools prioritised for additional supports.

The DEIS Action Plan for Improvement

All schools in the DEIS programme are required to have a *DEIS Action Plan for Improvement* and to use the school self-evaluation process to inform the development of the plan. The school's DEIS Action Plan for Improvement is its school improvement plan.

The DEIS Action Plan for Improvement should support improvement in the outcomes and experiences of children and young people. The plan should contain targets and actions under main themes: literacy, numeracy, attendance, retention, transitions, partnership with parents and others, and examination attainment.[1]

For each of the above themes, the DEIS Action Plan for Improvement should clearly identify children and young people prioritised for additional support, targets for improvement and agreed actions that will achieve the desired outcomes. The school should regularly monitor the implementation of the agreed actions to ensure that they are leading to improved outcomes and experiences for children and young people.

Evaluating the use of the DEIS action planning process

Each year the Inspectorate evaluates the quality of learning and action planning for improvement in a sample of schools in the DEIS programme. The evaluation focuses on:

- The quality of the learning outcomes and experiences of children and young people in the school.
- The quality of the school's action-planning process in two specific themes of the DEIS programme.

[1] Examination attainment refers to post-primary schools only. There are also three additional themes *Wellbeing, Leadership and Continuing Professional Development.* Actions and interventions for these additional themes should be integrated across the other main themes.

Evaluation findings

This is a report following an evaluation conducted in Scoil Mhuire on 24/11/2025. The specific themes evaluated were attendance and numeracy. The Inspectorate selected the attendance theme and the school selected numeracy as the second theme for the evaluation.

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:	
Child Protection	*Bí Cineálta*
1. The name of the DLP and the Child Safeguarding Statement (CSS) are prominently displayed near the main door of the school / in the reception area. *Following the school's adoption of the updated procedures 2025, it is also required to display a student-friendly version incorporating the name of the DLP beside the CSS*. 2. The school's child safeguarding statement has been ratified by the board and includes an annual review and a risk assessment. 3. All teachers visited were aware of who to go to if they had a child protection concern.	1. The school has developed an anti-bullying policy using Appendix A of *Bí Cineálta, it is reviewed annually (or earlier if required) and includes a student/pupil friendly version that is displayed where students/pupils and the school community can see it.* 2. The school's anti-bullying policy is published on its website and/or is readily accessible to board of management members, staff, parents and students/pupils. 3. The board of management minutes record that the principal provides an update to the board at each ordinary board meeting that meets the requirements of *Bí Cineálta*

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

Context

Scoil Mhuire is a co-educational, junior primary school for pupils up to 1st class and a single-stream primary school for girls from 2nd to 6th class. It is located in Tullamore, Co. Offaly and operates under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Meath. It has an administrative principal, a deputy principal, fourteen mainstream class teachers, three special class teachers and eight special education teachers. It had a home-school-community liaison (HSCL) co-ordinator and participated in the School Completion Programme (SCP). At the time of the evaluation, there were 253 pupils enrolled in the school. English was not the first language of over forty percent of pupils.

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.

Learning outcomes and experiences

The quality of learning outcomes and experiences was very good.

Strengths

- Pupils demonstrated positive attitudes and high levels of motivation and enjoyment in their learning. They engaged in purposeful learning activities and were provided with opportunities to work independently and collaboratively. Play-based and active learning methodologies enhanced pupils' learning experiences and contributed to the attainment of intended learner outcomes. Pupils shared their learning and listened attentively to the contributions of their peers during class discussions. Teachers valued and affirmed pupils' contributions and opinions. Parents who participated in the focus-group discussion indicated that support for the care and wellbeing of pupils was a significant strength of the school. During the focus-group discussion with pupils, almost all pupils indicated that they enjoyed aspects of their learning and school life. They reported they felt safe in school and their teachers listened and were kind and caring.

- School leaders and teachers fostered a positive culture of respectful interactions and held high expectations for learning and behaviour. Evidenced-based literacy and numeracy interventions were used in a highly effective manner to respond to pupils' individual needs. Classroom environments were stimulating and print rich. While there was evidence of effective discussion of the DEIS action plan with school staff, agreed strategies and approaches should be reflected more clearly in teachers' preparation documents and in classroom practice. School leaders should share key priorities the school are working on with pupils and with the wider school community.

Areas for action

- Classroom displays should be regularly updated to reflect pupils' current learning and used consistently to support teaching and learning. Pupils should be encouraged to use vocabulary and subject displays as learning tools when communicating their understanding and developing their ability to articulate their learning across the curriculum.
- DEIS action planning should maintain an appropriate focus on teaching and learning and on the consistent delivery of agreed whole-school approaches to improve learner outcomes and experiences.

Attendance

The quality of the school's action-planning process to improve attendance was good.

Strengths

- School leaders and teachers identified attendance as a key area requiring improvement. The principal and HSCL met regularly and analysed attendance data to identify trends and patterns of absences and to monitor the attendance patterns of pupils with high rates of absenteeism. Commendably, the HSCL gathered data that demonstrated the negative impact of poor attendance on attainment in literacy and numeracy over a three-year period. School completion supports were assigned to pupils with the greatest attendance challenges. The school put tailored supports in place for reluctant school attenders and their families.

- Every teacher had a very good understanding of attendance patterns in their class. Targeted interventions at particular times of the school year where attendance levels decreased significantly were impacting positively on the attendance of a significant number of pupils. Parents were requested to inform the school daily of the reason for absence, and parental reporting of absences was improving. Pupils arriving late and leaving school early were documented. However, more robust, explicit structures are needed to address the poor attendance of a significant number of pupils. School leadership should involve pupils and parents in DEIS action planning to improve attendance.

Areas for action

- School leaders and teachers should review and implement a whole-school approach to monitoring, analysing and supporting pupil attendance. Teachers' practices and timelines for tracking attendance together with universal and targeted interventions should be outlined in the DEIS action plan and shared with the entire school community
- To ensure that attendance is a top priority for all classroom teachers, school leaders should establish a school attendance team. As part of this process classroom teachers should report on emerging patterns and trends in relation to attendance in their class.

Numeracy

The quality of the school's action-planning process to improve numeracy was good.

Strengths

- As part of the DEIS action planning process staff surveys indicated that pupils' oral language competencies were impacting negatively on attainment in numeracy. At whole-school level teachers documented target mathematical language in their preparation for learning. Teachers were very effective communicators, who taught and explained mathematical vocabulary and concepts very well. Pupils worked collaboratively on appropriately challenging mathematical tasks.

- The school environment and all classrooms had very good mathematical displays showing examples of problems and mathematical language. However, pupils found it challenging to talk about their learning in Mathematics. In the focus group discussion pupils indicated that they used these mathematical displays to check table facts and look at examples of how to complete mathematical problems and operations. Opportunities for pupils to present and justify their work using mathematical displays as a prompt would consolidate their language and concept learning in Mathematics.

- Targeted interventions at the junior end of the school impacted positively on pupils' outcomes and experiences. Teachers worked collaboratively to respond to pupils' individual needs. They used concrete resources to develop pupils' concept of number. Comprehensive and ongoing assessment of learning during these interventions resulted in very effective differentiated learning experiences. However, targets and actions outlined in the DEIS action plan focused mainly on actions completed at system level. School leaders and teachers should ensure that the DEIS action plan guides teaching and learning in all classes. While the school recorded pupils' mathematical assessment data and used it to identify priorities in Mathematics, pupils' individual progress in learning in the subject area was not always clearly documented.

Areas for action

- Teachers should explicitly teach and display mathematical language and create regular opportunities for pupils to use this language to explain their mathematical thinking as they engage in activities and complete tasks.
- Targets and actions in numeracy in the DEIS action plan should be reviewed to ensure that they guide teachers' individual and collective practice and impact positively on pupils' learning outcomes and experiences. Key priorities in the DEIS action plan should be reflected in teachers' preparation.
- Teachers should document pupils' individual progress in Mathematics and create regular opportunities for pupils to reflect on their progress as learners.

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	Examples of descriptive terms
Excellent	**Provision that is excellent** is exemplary in meeting the needs of learners. This provision provides an example for other schools and settings of exceptionally high standards of provision.	Excellent; exemplary; outstanding; exceptionally high standard; with very significant strengths
Very good	**Provision that is very good** is very effective in meeting the needs of learners and is of a very high standard. There is potential to build on existing strengths to achieve an excellent standard.	Very good; of a very high quality; very effective practice; highly commendable; very successful
Good	**Provision that is good** is effective in meeting the needs of learners. There is need to build on existing strengths in order to address the aspects to be developed and achieve a very good standard.	Good; of good quality; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; strengths outweigh the shortcomings; appropriate provision although some possibilities for improvement exist
Requires improvement to achieve a good standard	**Provision that requires improvement to achieve a good standard** is not sufficiently effective in meeting the needs of learners. There is need to address certain deficiencies without delay in order to ensure that provision is good or better.	Fair; less than effective; less than sufficient; evident weaknesses that are impacting on learning; experiencing difficulty; shortcomings outweigh strengths; must improve in specified areas; action required to improve.
Requires significant improvement to achieve a good standard	**Provision that requires significant improvement to achieve a good standard** is not meeting the needs of learners. There is immediate need for significant action to address the areas of concern.	Weak; poor; ineffective; insufficient; unacceptable; experiencing significant difficulties; serious deficiencies in the areas evaluated; requiring significant change, development and improvement to be effective