



Circular 0034/2023

To: The Managerial Authorities, Principals and Board of Managements of Recognised Primary, Voluntary Secondary, Community and Comprehensive Schools participating in the DEIS programme, and the Chief Executives of Education and Training Boards.

**DEIS (DELIVERING EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY IN SCHOOLS)
ACTION PLANNING AND GRANT ALLOCATION
FOR ALL DEIS SCHOOLS**

Purpose

The purpose of this circular is to inform school management authorities of schools participating in the DEIS programme about:

- Requirement for schools participating in the DEIS programme to engage in systematic action planning for improvement.
- Requirement for the DEIS grant to be used to support those children and young people most at risk of educational disadvantage.
- The management and oversight of the DEIS grant.
- Supports available to assist schools.

A school's DEIS Action Plan for Improvement is its school improvement plan for the purposes of school self-evaluation (SSE). No additional or separate plan is necessary.

The Department will publish updated guidelines on the DEIS action planning process in September 2023.

Background

The DEIS programme is the key policy instrument to address educational disadvantage in primary and post-primary schools.

The DEIS programme is specifically designed to support students who are at risk of educational disadvantage and to improve educational outcomes at school level. The DEIS Plan¹ sets out the Department of Education's vision for education to become a proven

¹ [DEIS Plan](#)



pathway to better opportunities for those in communities at risk of disadvantage and social exclusion.

The DEIS grant should be utilised to attain the targets set in the school's DEIS action plan for improvement across the DEIS themes.

DEIS action planning requirements

All schools in the DEIS programme must engage in systematic action planning for improvement. This planning process should lead to the development and implementation of a three-year improvement plan: the DEIS Action Plan for Improvement. This plan is to be reviewed annually. **There is no requirement for any additional or separate plan for school self-evaluation (SSE) as the DEIS Action Plan for Improvement is the school improvement plan.**

DEIS schools participating in the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme are reminded their DEIS action plan should include the language-based criteria for recognition as a Gaeltacht school.

In devising, implementing, reviewing and updating the DEIS Action Plan for Improvement, the school community should engage in the six-step self-evaluation process as set out in Circular 0056/2022 School Self-Evaluation: Next Steps September 2022- June 2026.²

The DEIS Action Plan for Improvement should have a separate section for the main DEIS themes, which are as follows:

- Attendance
- Retention
- Literacy
- Numeracy
- Supporting educational transitions
- Partnership with parents and others
- Examination attainment (post-primary only)

The following three integrated themes were introduced as new DEIS themes in 2017.

- Leadership
- Continuous Professional Development
- Wellbeing

² [school-self-evaluation-next-steps-september-2022-june-2026](#)



While these integrated themes do not require a separate section each like the main DEIS themes, consideration should be given to how they can be integrated into the main themes, with relevant targets and actions set out as appropriate.

The Department will publish updated guidelines on the DEIS action planning process in September 2023.

Targeted use of the DEIS Grant

DEIS supports including the DEIS grant must be directed at those children and young people most at risk of educational disadvantage. The DEIS grant should be utilised to attain the targets set in the schools DEIS Action Plan for Improvement across the DEIS themes.

For DEIS schools included in the Home School Community Liaison (HSCL) scheme it is a requirement **that at least 10% of the annual DEIS grant to each school should be allocated for use on HSCL activities and made available to the HSCL co-ordinator.** Schools who have a HSCL coordinator are reminded of the importance of adhering to the terms of Circular 0016/2019 Home School Community Liaison Scheme³.

When expending the DEIS grant schools need to consider if the item/service is relevant to their DEIS action plan and whether there are any existing schemes or support programmes available before considering expenditure of funds under the DEIS grant. Examples of such schemes and further information on HSCL is provided in Appendix 1.

Management and oversight of DEIS grant

Schools should make every effort to ensure best value for money and adopt best financial practices. Schools must ensure compliance with DPER Circular 13/14 Management and Accountability for Grants from Exchequer Funds⁴.

Boards of management are required to keep all proper and usual accounts and records of all monies received or expenditure of such monies incurred. Such income and expenditure should be recorded in school accounts using the relevant codes provided by the Financial Support Services Unit (FSSU). Such records and accounts should also be available for audit/inspection by the FSSU or Internal Audit of the ETB and/or the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General.

³ [Circular 0016/2019](#)

⁴ <https://www.gov.ie/en/circular/10b42-circular-132014-management-of-and-accountability-for-grants-from-exchequer-funds/>



Supports available for schools

- From September 2023 onwards, the Professional Development Support Service (PDST), Centre for School Leadership (CSL), Junior Cycle for Teachers (JCT) and the National Induction Programme for Teachers (NIPT), will be integrated under the umbrella of Oide, which will continue to provide comprehensive support to schools including the DEIS Action Plan for Improvement.
- The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) will support schools as they work to improve the learning experiences and outcomes for students with additional needs.
- Schools can access support from the Inspectorate of the Department of Education in their DEIS action planning process by sending an e-mail requesting a DEIS advisory visit to sse@education.gov.ie
- The Financial Support Services Unit (FSSU) operates in Primary, Voluntary Secondary, Community and Comprehensive schools and is an important source of advice and support for school management and finance personnel on financial governance matters and enables them to comply with the provisions of the Education Act 1998 in terms of accountability, transparency and financial responsibility for State funds. Further information in relation to the supports available is on their website at <https://www.fssu.ie/> .
- Boards of management of Community National and Community Colleges should contact the relevant Education Training Board (ETB) for information regarding queries concerning financial matters of the school including the keeping of accounts and records, accounting practices, budgeting, expenditure and internal controls in accordance with the Education and Training Board Act 2013.

Queries in relation to the operation of the DEIS grant should be e-mailed to the following address: social_inclusion@education.gov.ie

Grainne Cullen
Principal Officer
Social Inclusion Unit

10th July 2023



Appendix 1

Schools should consider the following when expending the DEIS Grant:

1.1 Is the item/service relevant to the actions listed on the DEIS Action Plan for Improvement?

Will the purchase or use of the item/service assist in achieving the targets set by the DEIS Action Plan for Improvement? How will it assist in achieving the outcomes and can such outcomes be measured?

1.2 Is the item/service available under an existing scheme? Schools should look to other agencies and supports to identify if there are any existing schemes or support programmes available before considering expenditure of funds under the DEIS grant.

Schemes/support programmes to consider are those available for:

Scheme	Department
School Uniforms	Social Protection - Back to School Clothing and Footwear.
School Meals	Social Protection - School meals scheme
Utility Bills	Education – Capitation grant funding (except for out of hours DEIS related running costs)
School Books	Education – Primary schoolbooks grant – Free primary schoolbooks for all primary schools and special schools
CPD for Staff	Education - Professional Development Service for Teachers. Oide from September 2023
Building/ICT	Education – Minor Works Grant and ICT Infrastructure Grant
Assistive Technology	Education - Assistive Technology Scheme

Schools should also seek to cooperate with local agencies to improve service delivery and avoid duplication of resources.



2. Home School Community Liaison Scheme

HSCL is a school-based intervention to address the needs of students and their families in disadvantaged areas through acknowledging and developing the role of the parent as prime educator. This is achieved through targeting the families of students most at risk of educational disadvantage and putting in place a range of appropriate support interventions.

For DEIS schools included in the HSCL Scheme, it is a requirement that **at least 10% of the annual DEIS Grant to each school should be allocated for use on HSCL activities and made available to the HSCL Coordinator.**

If 10% is not sufficient, the school should use its discretion as to the appropriate amount of funding from the DEIS Grant that should be provided to operate the HSCL service. In addition to travel expenses currently being paid to HSCL Coordinators, travel expenses for HSCL Coordinators who attend Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Programmes organised by the Educational Welfare Service of TESS should be claimed from within the DEIS Grant.

DEIS schools participating in the HSCL Scheme are requested by the Department, on an annual basis, to provide information on HSCL expenditure including objectives, targets, activities and outcomes under HSCL.

3 School Facilities Expenditure

In instances, whereby community/not for profit groups seek use of the school facilities the Board of Management may need to consider the issue of costs in accordance with the Guidelines on the use of School Buildings outside of School hours⁵

The DEIS Grant may only be used to offset ancillary costs such as heating, lighting and other miscellaneous for pre-school and after school activities if it is linked to specific targets under the DEIS themes. For example, the cost of heating and lighting for a breakfast club operated in order to promote school attendance.

⁵ [Use of School Buildings outside of School hours](#)