

PRINCIPALS' INITIAL PERSPECTIVES OF ACTION PLANNING IN NEW DEIS PRIMARY AND POST-PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Report to the Department of Education

Sharon M. Nelis, Lorraine Gilleece & Thuy Dinh



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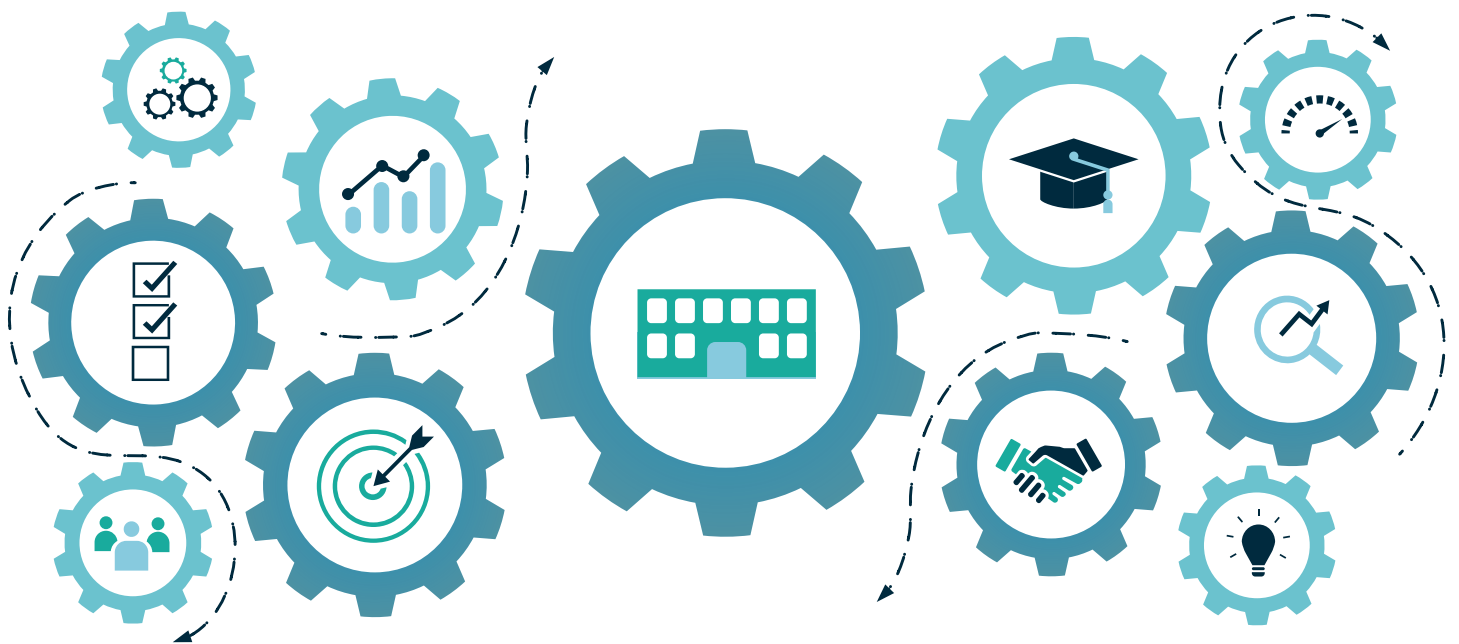


Table of Contents

Preface	v
Executive Summary	vii
Introduction	1
Methodology	6
Findings	8
ABOUT THE SCHOOL	8
DEIS ACTION PLANNING: GETTING STARTED	20
DEIS ACTION PLANNING: THEMES AND PRIORITIES	32
PRINCIPALS' VIEWS ON DEIS	43
Conclusions	49
References	51
Appendices	53

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Preface

- The expansion of the DEIS programme in 2022 offered an opportunity to capture the key thoughts, perceptions and opinions of principals as they began their DEIS journey.
- The Educational Research Centre (ERC) was asked by the Department of Education (DoE) to look at the experiences of new-to-DEIS school principals towards the end of their first academic year in the DEIS programme.
- In May 2023, the ERC gathered data on the experiences of principals in primary and post-primary schools that were new-to-DEIS in 2022.
- This report provides a snapshot of the schools that entered into DEIS in 2022, with a focus on the inception of the DEIS action planning process.

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

COGG	An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta & Gaelscolaíochta
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
CSL	Centre for School Leadership
DEIS	Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools
DoE	Department of Education
DPIA	Data Privacy Impact Assessment
EAL	English as an Additional Language
ERC	Educational Research Centre
EWO	Educational Welfare Officers
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
HSCL	Home School Community Liaison
JCSP	Junior Certificate Schools Programme
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
NCSE	National Council for Special Education
NEPS	National Educational Psychological Service
PDST	Professional Development Service for Teachers
SSE	School Self-Evaluation
SCP	School Completion Programme
SIU	Social Inclusion Unit
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant (or realistic) and Time-Bound
SNA	Special Needs Assistant
TALIS	Teaching and Learning International Survey
TESS	Tusla Education Support Service
TPL	Teacher Professional Learning
TY	Transition Year

Executive Summary

About the survey

- The addition of primary and post-primary schools to the DEIS programme in 2022 provided an important opportunity to gather information on principals' opinions and experiences as they started the DEIS action planning process.
- An online survey of principals in new-to-DEIS schools was carried out in April/May 2023, about one year after these schools received DEIS status.
- Response rates were high with over 80 % of eligible primary principals and over 70 % of eligible post-primary principals providing a response to the survey.
- The survey asked principals to provide some information about their schools. Specifically, principals provided some contextual information about their student cohorts,¹ including use of languages other than English or Irish at home and the percentages of students identifying as members of the Traveller or Roma communities. They also provided information about the perceived impact of the Home School Community Liaison (HSCL) scheme.
- Principals were asked to describe their own professional experience, their time use and their participation in Continuing Professional Development (CPD) activities.
- The survey also asked principals about DEIS action planning in the school.

Profile of the schools

- At primary level, the proportions of students who spoke a language other than English or Irish at home were higher in Band 1 and Band 2 schools than in DEIS Rural schools.² Based on principals' reports, the percentages of students speaking home languages other than English or Irish were also higher in Band 1 and Band 2 primary schools compared to at post-primary level where a very small percentage of principals (4 %) indicated that more than two-fifths of their student intake spoke another language at home. It was comparatively rare for principals to report communicating with parents or guardians³ in languages other than English or Irish with 70 % or more across school contexts indicating that this 'never' or 'rarely' took place.
- In general, principals estimated that low percentages of students identified as members of the Traveller or Roma communities. However, in about one-quarter of Urban Band 1 schools, principals indicated that Traveller or Roma students represented between 11 and 40 % of the school's intake.
- At primary level, more principals in DEIS Rural schools than their Urban counterparts reported that the school 'never' organised workshops or seminars for parents on learning or teaching issues. Three-quarters of Urban Band 1 principals and over half of Urban Band 2 principals indicated that the school organised workshops for parents 'at least two to three times per

1 The term 'student' is typically used for learners at post-primary level while the term 'pupil' is commonly used at primary level. In this report, the term 'student' is used for learners at both primary and post-primary levels although the principal survey described in this report used 'student' and 'pupil' at post-primary and primary levels, respectively.

2 At primary level, DEIS schools are allocated to one of three bands: Urban Band 1 (urban schools with the highest levels of concentrated disadvantage); Urban Band 2 (urban schools with high levels of concentrated disadvantage); or DEIS Rural (rural schools experiencing high levels of concentrated disadvantage). There is no banding at post-primary level.

3 In the remainder of this report, the term parent(s) is used as shorthand for parent(s)/guardian(s).

year'. Under half of post-primary principals reported that the school organised workshops or seminars for parents on issues related to learning or teaching 'at least two to three times per year'.

- Principals reported very positive perceived impacts of the HSCL programme in their schools, referencing improved communication between the school and the home as well as the provision of activities for parents and increased engagement on the part of parents as a consequence of the role.
- Principals were asked to provide some information on their levels of experience as a teacher and as a principal. About three-quarters of principals across school contexts indicated that they had worked as a teacher for at least 16 years. Turning to experience as a principal, a minority of primary principals (up to one-in-five in Urban Band 2 schools) were in their first year as a principal. At post-primary level, nearly one-in-three indicated that they were in their first year as a principal.
- Principals provided information about the proportions of their time spent on various activities. Managing the organisation was reported to consume a considerable proportion of time across primary and post-primary schools, responsible for about one-fifth to one-third of time on average. In Rural primary schools only, teaching activities were reported to take about two-fifths of the available time which is expected as most principals in this context had full time teaching responsibilities.

Continuing Professional Development (CPD)⁴ of principals

- Principals reported high levels of participation across a range of CPD activities. Subject matter/teaching methods and leadership/management were a common focus of these activities. CPD related to wellbeing of staff or students was also reported to have been widely attended. Over half of post-primary principals and up to 70% of primary principals reported that they had participated in Misneach (a two-year programme for newly appointed principals).
- Principals provided some information on their CPD priorities with some variation between priorities identified at primary and post-primary levels. Whole school support to implement curriculum change was more frequently identified as a need at primary level while higher percentages of post-primary than primary principals identified a 'high' level of need for CPD related to the teaching of students with Special Educational Needs. Similarly, higher percentages of post-primary principals than primary principals cited a 'high' level of need for CPD on using data for effective planning/school improvement.

DEIS action planning: Getting started

- The majority of principals at both primary and post-primary levels indicated that work had commenced on the school's DEIS plan. A large majority of principals indicated that a DEIS action planning team was in place in the school at the time of the survey.
- Very high percentages of principals reported some involvement in DEIS action planning of Deputy principals, Assistant Principals, subject/mainstream teachers, Special Education teachers and HSCL coordinators. Lower percentages of principals indicated that DEIS

4 In this report, the term Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is used in place of Teachers' Professional Learning (TPL).

action planning in the school involved SNAs, members of the Board of Management, School Completion Programme (SCP) Coordinators, parents or students. Even lower percentages of principals reported involvement in DEIS planning of the school secretary, caretaker, chaplain or librarian. Members of the Board of Management were most likely to be involved in monitoring progress towards targets and less likely to be involved in other areas of action planning.

- Very high percentages of principals indicated that informal networks were useful to them as sources of support. Similarly, very high percentages indicated that support provided by the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) was ‘very’ or ‘somewhat’ useful.⁵
- The most common forms of support and assistance principals received included: informal contact with other DEIS schools, support from the PDST and involvement in regional networks of DEIS communities of practice. Approximately half of the principals reported receiving support from the Inspectorate.⁶
- Principals were asked to indicate the level of usefulness of each of the supports they had received in relation to DEIS planning. Almost all principals across school contexts indicated that informal contact with other DEIS schools was ‘very useful’ or ‘somewhat useful’. Also across all school contexts, high percentages of principals reported that support from the PDST and support from the Inspectorate was ‘very useful’ or ‘somewhat’ useful. Relative to principals in Urban Band 2 and DEIS Rural schools, higher percentages of Band 1 and post-primary principals endorsed as ‘very’ or ‘somewhat’ useful their participation in regional networks or DEIS communities of practice. A high percentage of post-primary principals rated support from the Tusla Education Support Service (TESS) as ‘very’ or ‘somewhat’ useful.
- Most principals found their previous experience with the School Self-Evaluation (SSE) process to be valuable in shaping their DEIS action plans. Over 90% of principals across all school contexts had a positive view of how prior experience with SSE supported DEIS action planning.
- From a list of several items, principals were asked to identify the areas in which the school planned to spend its allocated DEIS grant. Key priority areas were HSCL activities for parents (in Urban DEIS schools and at post-primary level) and wellbeing-related activities. Improvements to resources and infrastructure for learning and teaching (e.g., library books, software or hardware) were also high on the list of expected expenditure. Very low percentages of principals in any school context intended to spend the DEIS grant on homework clubs, breakfast clubs or other after-school activities.
- Principals were asked to select the three DEIS supports likely to have the ‘greatest’ impact in their school. There was some variation across DEIS bands at primary level in principals’ perceptions of the DEIS supports likely to have the ‘greatest’ impact. Principals in Band 1 and Band 2 schools rated the HSCL scheme as one of the three supports most likely to have the greatest impact. The reduction in class sizes was identified by about one-fifth of Band 1 principals as one of the most impactful supports. About one-in-seven principals in Rural schools identified access to the School Meals Programme as the most impactful support; a similar percentage identified additional grant aid provided through DEIS. Very few principals

5 Since September 2023, the PDST has been incorporated into Oide (www.oide.ie).

6 The Inspectorate provides advisory support for the DEIS action planning process as it applies to School Self-Evaluation (SSE). This includes information sessions, advisory visits to schools, webinars and presentations and the provision of materials to support SSE.

considered that the ‘greatest’ impact would be achieved through priority access to the Centre for School Leadership (CSL), priority to a range of professional development supports or through the Incredible Years Teacher Classroom Management or Friends programmes.

- For principals at post-primary level, the three supports most commonly identified as likely to bring about the ‘greatest’ impact were the enhanced school books grant scheme, the enhanced guidance counselling provision and access to the School Meals Programme.
- In terms of action planning and implementation, principals reported different levels of engagement in key activities.
 - **Use of data:** The importance of using attendance and achievement data in planning was recognised by the majority of principals. More than half of principals reported that they have used SMART targets. However, using data from students and parents was less common.
 - **Identification of needs:** Most primary principals indicated that the school identified students with the highest levels of need. This was less common among post-primary principals. More than three-fifths of principals at both primary and post-primary levels reported that the school employed the Continuum of Support framework for the purposes of targeting support in the school.
 - **Focus on wellbeing:** The level of emphasis on student and staff wellbeing varied across school contexts with a stronger focus on student and staff wellbeing in DEIS action planning evident at primary level than at post-primary level. Higher percentages of principals in Band 2 and Rural schools than in Band 1 or post-primary schools indicated that the school emphasised student wellbeing in action planning. About half of Band 1 and Band 2 principals reported placing a focus on staff wellbeing in action planning compared to two-fifths of Rural and one-third of post-primary principals, respectively.
 - **Engagement with teachers on DEIS:** There were differences across school contexts in the degree of emphasis placed on the DEIS plan at staff meetings, with a much higher percentage of post-primary principals than primary principals reporting a strong emphasis at staff meetings on the DEIS plan.
 - **Professional development:** Few principals reported that the school emphasised the development of teachers’ CPD plans as part of DEIS planning. Similarly, low percentages of principals reported placing a strong emphasis on CPD participation rates or on evaluating the impact of teachers’ CPD.

DEIS action planning: Themes and priorities

- There were notable changes in the priorities of school principals regarding attendance monitoring between the school years 2021/22 (pre-entry to DEIS) and 2022/23 (since entry to DEIS).
 - **Overall increase in priority:** Principals across the school contexts reported a higher priority on monitoring attendance patterns at both the school and class/year levels since joining DEIS. The monitoring of attendance of specific cohorts of students also became more of a priority in 2022/23 relative to 2021/22. Relative to their Urban and post-primary

counterparts, DEIS principals in Rural schools were less likely to prioritise the monitoring of attendance of specific cohorts of students although the percentage of principals in Rural schools engaging in this activity increased from 2021/22 to 2022/23.

- **Student punctuality and consideration of the timetable:** Monitoring student punctuality and considering how the timetable affects student attendance were reported to receive a higher level of priority in 2022/23 relative to 2021/22.
- Principals provided examples of strategies implemented in their schools for the monitoring and analysis of attendance data. Many principals reported an increase in the use of technology to monitor attendance, having dedicated individuals focused on attendance management, continued or improved use of data and attendance reports or modifications to school timetables (e.g., scheduling of events and activities on Fridays/Mondays). In some schools, incentives and rewards were introduced to encourage students to improve their attendance. Principals also reported engaging more actively with parents to address attendance issues.
- Various strategies were used by schools to support incoming students and facilitate their transition and adaptation to school. The choice of approach varied depending on the strategy and by school level. Whole school approaches were favoured in the main but in some areas, such as supporting students transitioning from other schools, these were more commonly implemented by individual teachers or groups of teachers.
- There was an increase in the percentages of both primary and post-primary principals who considered the monitoring of student retention as a 'high' priority in the school year 2022/23 compared to the year prior to entry to DEIS. Principals reported a number of strategies as effective in supporting the retention of students including fostering good communication between the school and parents; organising workshops; arranging visits to schools and offering rewards or incentives to encourage students to remain engaged at school. The value of working together with HSCL coordinators and the SCP programme and also working with other external agencies (e.g., Tusla) to support the retention of students was recognised by principals.
- Principals recognised the importance of numeracy and literacy across all subjects or areas of the curriculum. Almost all principals at both levels agreed that the development of numeracy and literacy skills are central to the teaching of all subject areas. Nonetheless, the majority of primary principals agreed that the development of literacy takes place mainly as part of English or Gaeilge; about one-third of post-principals agreed with this statement. Most principals at primary level also 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' that the development of numeracy skills takes place mainly as part of mathematics; three-fifths of post-primary principals agreed with this statement.
- Findings suggest that schools have employed a number of strategies, approaches and resources to actively promote the development of literacy and numeracy. In response to an open-ended question, principals reported that various initiatives had been launched in schools aimed at the development of literacy and numeracy skills; revisions had been made in light of DEIS status; greater use was made of target setting and a stronger emphasis was placed on using a whole school approach.

- In terms of involving parents in schools, most principals agreed that their school used a variety of means to communicate with parents.
- Principals also agreed that they provided opportunities for parents to become involved in the wider school life. However, the percentages of principals who agreed that there were opportunities for parents to be involved in activities related to their children's learning were lower, with just over half of principals in Band 1 and Band 2 schools agreeing with this statement.
- In response to an open-ended item, principals reported that there were challenges in communication with parents but indicated that schools adopted various strategies to overcome these challenges. Lack of access to technology and the internet, language barriers and changes in parent contact details which were not communicated to schools were noted as challenges. Principals reported that schools were using technology in various ways to bridge communication gaps. HSCL Coordinators were reported to be making calls or visits to parents to support parents in learning to use technology. More traditional means of communication (e.g., letters, phone calls, in-person meetings) were also reported to be used by some schools.
- Post-primary principals reported that schools used a combination of approaches for the purposes of monitoring subject choice, take-up and attainment. While it was reported that many schools adopted a whole school approach for determining subject offerings, both whole school and individual subject departments were involved in monitoring uptake and attainment. For a very small number of schools (less than 10 % of respondents), there may be gaps in their monitoring of examination attainment as principals reported 'limited or no' monitoring of examination attainment.
- In providing further detail on the approaches used for monitoring subject choice, take-up and attainment, principals identified various strategies including surveys of student interests to inform planning, trial experiences of subjects, expansion of the number of subject options and ensuring that students and parents were well informed on subject choices. In addition, some principals noted that their schools carried out regular evaluations of overall performance and included an analysis of the students' achievement in a range of subjects.
- At least two-thirds of post-primary principals agreed that guidance supports⁷ for students were sufficient to inform students' choices of both curriculum programmes and subject options. Lower percentages of principals reported that they school routinely monitored student, parent or teacher perceptions of the adequacy of guidance supports. In further elaborating on the issue of guidance supports, some principals referenced challenges in the recruitment of guidance staff. Some referenced changes such as refining their school plans for guidance or supporting staff development related to guidance. Events and activities for students, such as visits to further and higher education institutions, were some of the guidance activities reported by principals.
- Principals recognised that entering the DEIS programme offers numerous benefits such as increased resources, support for students and their families and professional development

7 Note principals were not asked to distinguish between guidance allocations prior to DEIS status and the enhanced guidance allocation under DEIS.

opportunities. However, principals noted that entrance to DEIS also presents some challenges related to administration, workload, training, staff adaptation and managing expectations. Supports may be needed to assist principals to navigate these challenges although it should be noted the survey was conducted at the early stages of DEIS implementation.

Conclusions

- In general, principals welcomed the inclusion of their school in DEIS and recognised the benefits brought to students and the wider school community by the programme. Nonetheless, there may be value in considering the administrative burden of the DEIS planning process on principals in DEIS Rural schools, given the higher likelihood of such principals having teaching responsibilities.
- Findings highlight some areas in which principals identify a ‘high’ level of need for CPD. At primary level, principals were more likely to identify a ‘high’ level of need for CPD in the area of whole school support to implement curriculum changes. At post-primary level, principals were more likely to cite a ‘high’ level of need for CPD related to using data for effective planning and school improvement or for teaching students with Special Educational Needs. It was comparatively rare for principals to report developing a plan for CPD in tandem with the school’s DEIS plan or to report regular review of CPD participation rates in the school. There may be a benefit in principals engaging in more active review of CPD and its impact as part of the DEIS planning process to ensure that both individual teacher interests and needs as well as school priorities are reflected in the CPD activities selected by teachers.
- High percentages of principals reported frequent opportunities for parents to become involved in wider school life. However, not more than one-quarter of principals in any school context reported using data gathered from parents to inform DEIS action planning. It was comparatively rare for principals to report communicating with parents in languages other than English or Irish. Given the strong emphasis placed on parental involvement in the DEIS plan, ongoing consideration should be given by schools to the most effective means of home school communication, the best ways to support parental involvement in children’s learning and the voice of parents in the school’s DEIS plan.
- Findings show that a large majority of principals were in their first year as principal of a DEIS school (reflecting the recent entry of their current school to DEIS), although most had many years of teaching and/or leadership experience in other school settings. Most reported that prior experience of the SSE process was beneficial for DEIS action planning. Principals generally welcomed the support for DEIS action planning they had received from external sources (such as the PDST or the Inspectorate). High percentages also recognised the value of informal contact with other DEIS schools and participation in regional networks or communities of practice. These findings suggest that a combination of formal and informal CPD and networking opportunities are likely to best support the DEIS action planning process. Furthermore, principal needs for supports are likely to vary based on their prior experiences as well as individual preferences.

Introduction

Since 2005, Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) is the main policy response to educational disadvantage in Ireland (Department of Education and Science, 2005). DEIS was further developed and refined in the *DEIS Plan 2017* (Department of Education and Skills, 2017). The five goals in the plan are to: implement a framework for the identification of DEIS schools and resource allocation to these schools; improve experiences and outcomes of students; develop the capacity of school staff to use DEIS resources; support best practice in schools; and support DEIS schools through, monitoring, research and evaluation to achieve the goals of the plan.

Under DEIS, schools that have the highest levels of disadvantage are identified to receive additional supports, resources and access to interventions to ensure equitable opportunities for all students. Methods of identification of DEIS schools have been refined from the original approach which was survey-based at primary level and used aggregated centrally held data (e.g., retention rates and examination achievement) at post-primary level. In 2017, a more objective approach was implemented whereby student data held by the Department of Education were combined with the Pobal HP deprivation score, based on data from the Census of the population and calculated at the small-area level. These were used to generate a school-level indicator of disadvantage (Department of Education and Skills, 2017). The DEIS 2017 identification process was further refined in early 2022, with refinements including a weighted approach to assessing disadvantage as well as adjustments for the proportions of students from Traveller or Roma communities, students living in homeless accommodation and students residing in accommodation for people who have sought International Protection from their home country (Department of Education, 2022a). The 2022 refinement to DEIS identification resulted in an extension of the DEIS programme to 322 additional schools, with a large majority of these at primary level.⁸ This extension comprised 42 new Urban Band 1 schools, 81 new Urban Band 2 schools, 161 new DEIS Rural schools and 38 new DEIS post-primary schools.⁹

At primary level, DEIS schools are allocated to one of three bands: Urban Band 1 (urban schools with the highest levels of concentrated disadvantage); Urban Band 2 (urban schools with high levels of concentrated disadvantage) or DEIS Rural (rural schools experiencing high levels of concentrated disadvantage). There is no banding at post-primary level. Depending on the DEIS band, there are different levels of support for schools (a list of supports is shown in Appendix 1). Among these supports, there are additional teaching resources to provide smaller class sizes, access to literacy and numeracy initiatives, opportunities for professional development and capacity building for school leaders and teachers. Parental and community engagement is emphasised in the *DEIS Plan 2017*.

The HSCL scheme is available to all primary DEIS Band 1, Band 2 and DEIS post-primary schools. Appointed as part of the scheme, HSCL Coordinators work within schools to establish strong

8 Although the refined DEIS identification system resulted in an extension of the programme to 322 schools, the number eligible for the current survey was 320 due to an amalgamation and one school closure.

9 A further 39 primary schools were reclassified from one DEIS band to another (e.g., Urban Band 2 to Urban Band 1 or DEIS Rural to an Urban band).

relationships between families, schools and the wider community. They facilitate workshops and programmes to enhance parenting skills, develop family literacy skills and provide guidance on various aspects of education and child development. They encourage parents¹⁰ to actively engage in their children's education and to attend parent-teacher meetings (Department of Education and Science, 2005-2006). A number of evaluations of the HSCL scheme have been undertaken by the ERC (Archer & Shortt, 2003; Ryan, 1994; Weir et al., 2018) that show some changes in the time spent on a range of activities by HSCL Coordinators since the inception of the scheme. Findings also show strong support for the scheme from principals, teachers and parents and evidence that the key aims of the scheme were being met.

The DEIS grant is provided to support designated schools to attain the targets set in their plan for improvement. Schools have flexibility in how they can spend their budget allocation (Department of Education, 2019). Guidelines on the appropriate use of the DEIS grant are provided to schools to manage DEIS grant funding. For DEIS schools included in the HSCL scheme, there is a specific requirement that at least 10% of the annual DEIS grant must be earmarked for use on HSCL-led activities (Department of Education, 2019, 2023a).

All schools in Ireland are required to undertake a school self-evaluation (SSE) process of action planning for school improvement (Department of Education, 2022b). In DEIS schools, SSE takes place through the DEIS action planning process and there is no additional requirement for a separate plan for SSE in DEIS schools. The six-step SSE process includes identifying a focus, gathering evidence, analysing and making judgments, writing and sharing improvement plans, putting the improvement plan into action and monitoring the impact.¹¹

Guidance on SSE for primary, special and post-primary schools is supported by a wider quality framework across two key dimensions of teaching and learning and leadership and management, outlined in *'Looking at Our School 2022'* (Department of Education, 2022c, 2022d). It is anticipated that by implementing effective action plans, DEIS schools can work towards reducing educational inequalities, improving outcomes and promoting equity in education (Department of Education, 2023a). Various school supports for action planning for improvement are available through the Inspectorate, Oide (an integrated support service for teachers and school leaders)¹², the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) and An Chomhairle Um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta (COGG). Supports provided to schools include SSE information sessions, advisory visits to schools by the Inspectorate, webinars and presentations and the provision of supporting materials. The Inspectorate also supports SSE with external evaluations. Collaboration among schools is promoted to share learning in relation to SSE (Department of Education, 2022b).

Focusing specifically on action planning in DEIS schools, there is a requirement to develop a three-year improvement plan under the following main themes:

- Attendance;
- Retention;
- Literacy;

10 In this report, the term 'parent(s)' is used as shorthand for parent(s)/guardian(s).

11 <https://www.gov.ie/en/service/3f07cf-school-self-evaluation/>

12 <https://oide.ie>

- Numeracy;
- Supporting educational transitions;
- Partnership with parents and others; and
- Examination attainment (post-primary only).

In 2017, three themes were added for schools to integrate into their DEIS action planning for school improvement (Department of Education and Skills, 2017). Schools are now expected to integrate a focus on:

- Leadership;
- Continuing Professional Development (CPD); and
- Wellbeing.

External monitoring of DEIS action planning for improvement is conducted by the Inspectorate of the Department of Education through their Evaluations of action planning for improvement in DEIS Schools. Composite reports are published occasionally drawing on inspection findings related to a particular theme. A review of planning processes in DEIS primary schools by the Inspectorate of the (then) Department of Education and Skills found strong engagement in planning and positive impacts across DEIS targets, including in the areas of literacy and numeracy and school climate. Effective school leadership was viewed as essential for successful action planning (Department of Education and Skills, 2015).

More recent findings from the Inspectorate show that shared ownership of the DEIS action planning process was widely found within DEIS schools and the process was deemed to have had a good/very good impact on teaching and learning for three-quarters of the primary schools inspected. CPD was given high priority in most DEIS schools (Department of Education, 2022e). Areas for development included the need to train leaders further in the use of SMART targets and in the use of data to inform targets. Sharing good practices among networks of DEIS schools was also identified as an area in need of work. The Department of Education responded to this report with actions to monitor progress, increase training for school leaders and provide networking opportunities (Department of Education, 2022f). Forthcoming reports from the Inspectorate will consider DEIS action planning for literacy, numeracy and attainment and other DEIS themes such as attendance and retention.

As noted previously, a large number of new DEIS schools were added to the programme in 2022. Schools were informed of their inclusion on March 9th, 2022.¹³ All schools were advised of an appeals process open to any school that was not satisfied with the outcome following the application of the DEIS identification model to their school enrolment data (Department of Education, 2022g). New DEIS schools were subsequently provided with a number of webinars and information events, e.g., in-person seminars from the Inspectorate on DEIS action planning for improvement; webinars from the TESS on implementation of the Home School Community Liaison programme and information from the PDST on relevant CPD.

13 <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/a3c9e-extension-of-deis-to-further-schools/>

The expansion of the DEIS programme, with the addition of both primary and post-primary schools in 2022, offered a unique opportunity to capture the key perceptions and opinions of school leaders as they began their DEIS journey and commenced work on DEIS action planning for improvement. The Social Inclusion Unit (SIU) and the Inspectorate of the Department of Education decided to survey new-to-DEIS school principals nearly one year after entering the DEIS programme.

The aims of the survey were to:

- gather a profile of new-to-DEIS school principals, including role, experience in the DEIS context and allocation of time to tasks and responsibilities.
- gauge CPD uptake and the future needs of principals.
- establish if all the new-to-DEIS schools have developed, in consultation with the school community, a DEIS action plan for improvement.
- look at the approaches and processes the school takes in action planning and the extent that new-to-DEIS schools are availing of the various supports offered for action planning.
- understand priority areas of DEIS grant expenditure.
- look at the use of data in schools to inform their plans for school improvement.
- identify the main priority areas for improvement that this cohort of DEIS schools will initially focus on.
- hear principals' views on what DEIS status means for themselves and their schools, as well as to gather principals' perceptions of possible wider impact of inclusion in DEIS.

Methodology

Research design

An online survey was conducted with principals in the new-to-DEIS schools. Data collected were both quantitative and qualitative (open-ended text responses). Results presented in this report are descriptive in nature.

Survey development

The Educational Research Centre (ERC) in collaboration with the Department of Education's SIU, the Inspectorate of the Department of Education and members of the DEIS Monitoring and Evaluation group drafted the survey questions with a focus on the initiation and implementation of the DEIS action planning process. Some questions were adapted from relevant international studies, including the OECD Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS).¹⁴

The survey was piloted with principals of schools that entered DEIS prior to 2022. The Inspectorate provided six contacts (3 primary level and 3 post-primary level) to approach for piloting. Responses were secured from one principal at primary level and two at post-primary level. The piloting informed the survey completion time (approx. 45 minutes) and instructions for respondents. Some modifications were also made to the presentation order and wording of items following piloting.

Separate surveys were made available online for primary and post-primary levels as some of the survey items differed by level due to the DEIS supports offered at each level and the different school contexts. Surveys were translated into Irish (Gaeilge) and both English and Irish language versions were made available for completion.¹⁵

Data collection

Following a Data Privacy Impact Assessment (DPIA), and in accordance with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the ERC's data protection policies, data were collected using an online survey tool (Qualtrics).¹⁶ The online surveys were anonymous and respondents were reminded not to give their name, the name of their school or any other identifying information within their responses.

All principals of new-to-DEIS schools in 2022 (282 primary schools; 38 post-primary schools) were invited to take part by email and informed that the purpose of the survey was to help understand principals' early experiences of DEIS action planning and implementation.¹⁷

Principals were provided with a link to the online survey within the invitation email. They were advised that where possible, it was preferable to complete the survey in one sitting but were given the option to save and return to the survey as required. Where open-text options were available,

¹⁴ <https://www.oecd.org/education/talis/talis2018questionnaires.htm>

¹⁵ The term 'student' is typically used for learners at post-primary level while the term 'pupil' is commonly used at primary level. In this report, the term 'student' is used for learners at both primary and post-primary levels although the principal survey described in this report used student and pupil at post-primary and primary levels, respectively.

¹⁶ Copyright © 2023 Qualtrics <https://www.qualtrics.com>

¹⁷ As noted in the Introduction, the number of schools eligible for the survey was slightly lower than the total number admitted to DEIS in Spring 2022 as a result of one school closure and one amalgamation in the intervening period.

principals were encouraged to use this space to provide examples of practices within the school to allow for richer insights.

Consent

Principals provided their consent to take part and consent for any information provided to be used for research and the wider monitoring and evaluation of DEIS. For all questions, principals were free to continue the survey without answering a specific question if they wished.

Response rates

The main data collection took place between 18/04/2023 and 19/05/2023; this included an additional week from the originally proposed end-date. Both email and phone call reminders, from the SIU and the ERC, were made to principals to increase response rates.

At primary level, 282 school principals were invited to take part and response rates ranged from 73 % to 89 % across DEIS bands. At post-primary level, 38 school principals were invited to take part and the response rate was 71 % (Table 1).

Table 1: Survey response rates by DEIS status

		Target	Responded	
Primary	Total	282	238	84%
	Band 1	42	37	88 %
	Band 2	80	58	73 %
	Rural	160	143	89 %
Post-primary	Total	38	27	71%

A small number of respondents completed the survey in Irish (Primary n=4, 1.7 %; Post-primary n=1, 3.7 %). Respondents with 90 % or more completion of the survey items were included in the analysis. This resulted in a small number of surveys being excluded from analysis.

Descriptive analysis of data

- The data were exported from Qualtrics into IBM SPSS 29®.
- This report presents a descriptive analysis of the survey items and results are presented for primary and post-primary levels side-by-side where appropriate.
- No tests were conducted to examine the statistical significance of differences between responses of principals by DEIS category.
- Qualitative analysis was conducted on principals' responses to the open-ended questions. Responses were categorised into themes to reflect the main content. Illustrative quotes are presented to provide examples of reported practices within schools.
- Findings at the primary level are broken down by DEIS band.
- Results presented are the percentages of principals in each DEIS group who provided the response.

Findings

Findings are presented using the following headings:

- About the school.
- DEIS action planning: Getting started.
- DEIS action planning: Themes and priorities.
- Principals' views on DEIS.

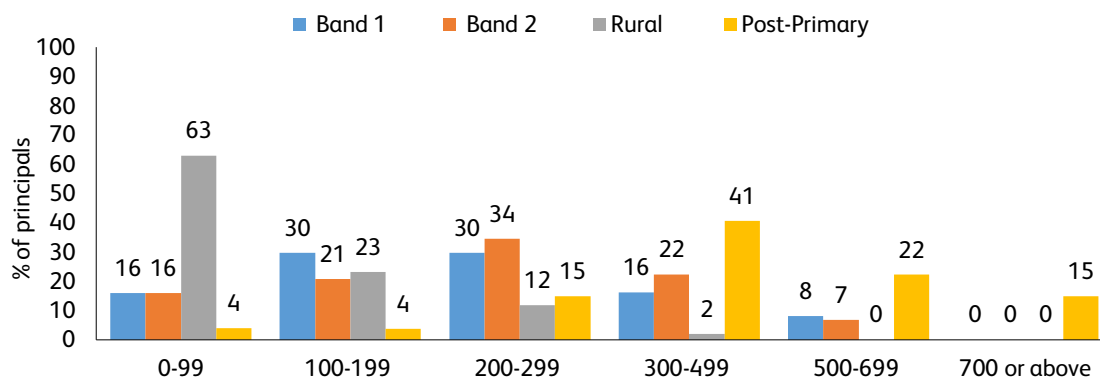
About the School

This section provides some information on the profile of students in the schools as reported by principals, methods of communication between the school and the home and the inception of the HSCL scheme (where applicable). It also looks at principals and their levels of experience, allocation of time to activities and responsibilities and CPD uptake and perceived needs.

School enrolment

Unsurprisingly, the majority of primary principals in DEIS Rural schools were employed in smaller schools (<100 students). School enrolment numbers were generally higher at post-primary level, with 41 % of post-primary principals employed in medium sized schools (300-499 students), see Figure 1.

Figure 1: Primary and post-primary enrolment numbers



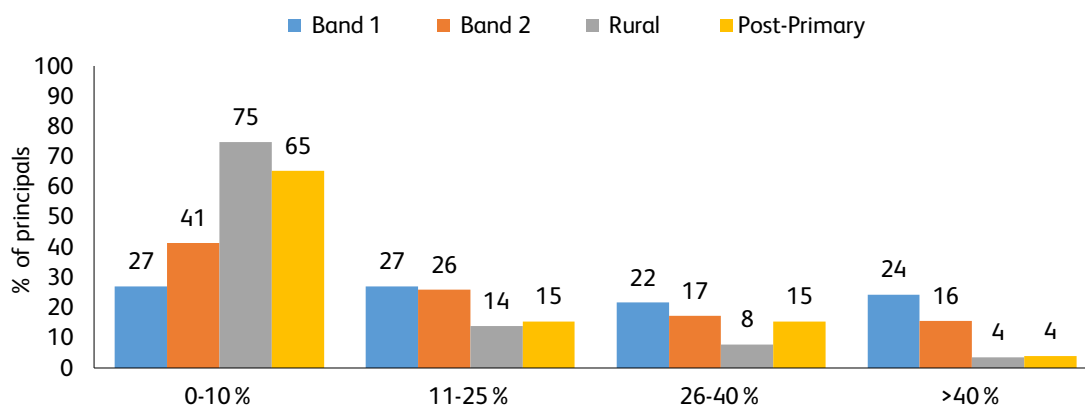
Languages in use by students and for home-school communications

Principals were asked how many languages, aside from English or Irish, were used by students as their main home language. The median number of different languages aside from English or Irish spoken by students within schools was higher for urban schools (Band 1: median = 15; Band 2: median = 10) and lower for Rural schools (median = 2). At post-primary level, the median number of home languages other than English or Irish was 8.¹⁸

Principals also indicated the proportion of students in the school who spoke a language other than English or Irish as their main home language (Figure 2).

¹⁸ As noted in the Introduction, tests of statistical significance were not conducted as part of these analyses and findings are intended to be descriptive in nature.

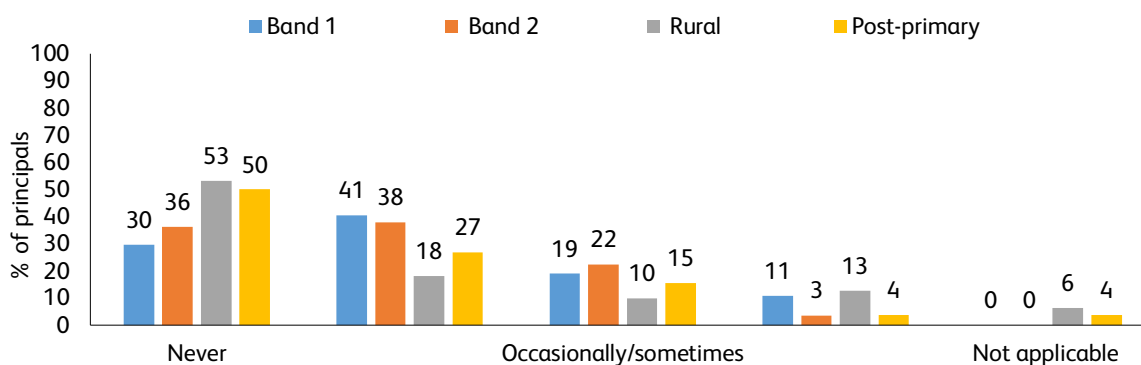
Figure 2: Proportions of students who speak a home language other than English or Irish



Consistent with the median number of different languages spoken, the proportions of students who spoke another language were higher in Band 1 and Band 2 primary schools compared to Rural. In about a quarter of Band 1 schools, principals reported that more than 40% of students had home languages other than Irish and English. At post-primary level, the majority of principals (65%) reported that 10% or less of students spoke another language at home.

Most of the principals at both primary and post-primary levels reported that they ‘never’ or ‘rarely’ communicated in writing with parents in home languages other than English or Irish (Figure 3). A small minority of principals reported that this practice was ‘frequently/usually/always’ used.

Figure 3: Frequency of communication with parents in home languages other than English or Irish

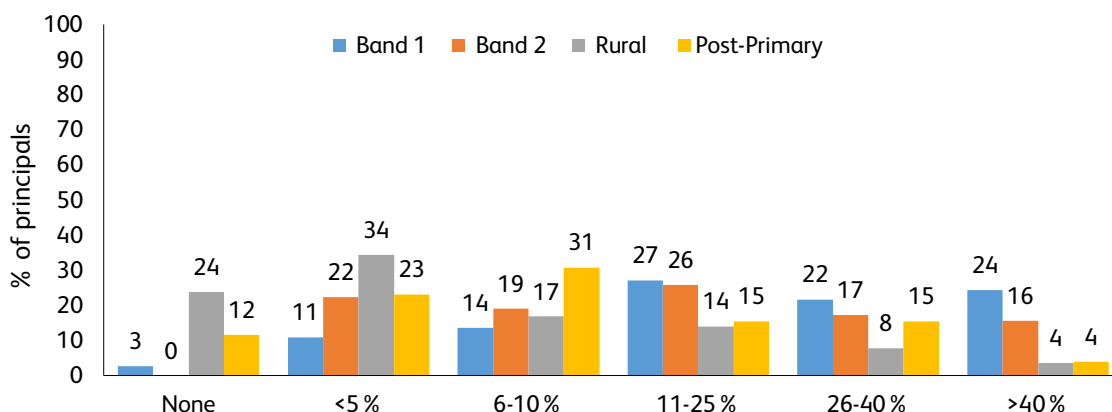


It is of interest to consider how the frequency of communication in languages other than English or Irish relates to the percentages of students speaking other languages at home (See Appendix 2 for more detail). At primary level there was no clear association between the percentages of students reported to have other languages at home and the frequency of communication in languages other than English or Irish. Similar to their primary counterparts, there was no evidence at post-primary level that having higher percentages of students with other languages was associated with a greater frequency of home-school communication in other languages.

Students as members of the Traveller or Roma communities

Principals indicated the proportion of students in their school who were members of the Traveller or Roma communities (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Proportions of students who identify as members of the Traveller or Roma communities



- Principals from over half of DEIS Rural schools (56 %) indicated that no students identified as members of the Traveller or Roma communities.
- A small minority of principals in Band 1 (14 %) and Band 2 (16 %) schools and about one-quarter at post-primary level (27 %) reported that their school had no students who identified as members of the Traveller or Roma communities.
- Just one-in-twenty (5 %) Band 1 principals indicated that Traveller or Roma students comprised 26-40 % of their student cohort. In general, there was higher representation of Traveller or Roma students in Urban DEIS primary schools (either Band 1 or Band 2) than in Rural DEIS or at post-primary level.

Communication and activities with parents

Principals were asked about their frequency of communication with parents in general (Table 2).

- Almost all principals at both primary and post-primary levels reported communicating with parents at least ‘2-3 times a year’ to inform parents about school accomplishments.
- Almost 90 % of primary principals reported communicating with parents at least ‘2-3 times a year’ for the purposes of supporting parents in helping with schoolwork. While two-thirds of post-primary principals reported communicating with parents for this purpose at least ‘2-3 times a year’, a small minority of post-primary principals ‘never’ communicated with parents for the purposes of supporting parents to help their child with schoolwork.
- Most principals provided parents with additional learning materials at least ‘2-3 times a year’. Higher percentages of primary than post-primary principals reported providing additional learning materials ‘2-3 times a year’ or more frequently. The greater emphasis at primary level on communicating with parents for the purposes of supporting parents to help with schoolwork or to provide additional learning materials likely reflects the greater independence of learners at post-primary level.

Table 2: Frequency of communication and activities with parents

	School type	Never %	Once a year %	2-3 times a year or more %
Inform parents about school accomplishments	Band 1	0	0	100
	Band 2	0	2	98
	Rural	1	1	97
	Post-primary	4	4	92
Support parents in helping their child with schoolwork	Band 1	0	11	90
	Band 2	0	12	88
	Rural	3	11	86
	Post-primary	15	19	67
Provide parents with additional learning materials	Band 1	11	5	83
	Band 2	7	19	74
	Rural	7	17	76
	Post-primary	7	33	60
Organise workshops or seminars for parents on learning or teaching issues	Band 1	8	19	73
	Band 2	10	36	53
	Rural	41	35	24
	Post-primary	11	44	45
Ask parents' for opinions on issues relating to school organisation	Band 1	5	41	54
	Band 2	7	29	64
	Rural	14	35	51
	Post-primary	11	11	78
Inform parents about the overall academic achievement of the school	Band 1	16	38	46
	Band 2	9	43	48
	Rural	11	49	40
	Post-primary	7	30	63

- A majority of principals of Band 1 schools indicated that the school organised workshops at least '2-3 times a year'; the percentages were lower in Band 2, Rural and post-primary schools. Over two-fifths of principals of Rural schools indicated that the school 'never' did this activity. This may reflect the fact that HSCL co-ordinators are not a support offered to Rural schools under DEIS and typically, the organisation of parent workshops is a responsibility of HSCL coordinators. Alternatively (or additionally), less frequent parent workshops in DEIS Rural schools may reflect a lower level of perceived need for such activities, given some evidence of higher levels of home support for students in DEIS Rural schools relative to their urban DEIS counterparts (Weir et al., 2015).
- Higher percentages of post-primary principals than primary principals reported that they ask parents' opinions on issues relating to school organisation at least '2-3 times a year'. Over three-quarters of post-primary principals were in this category compared to half to two-thirds of primary principals.

- A small minority of principals in primary and post-primary ‘never’ informed parents about the overall academic achievement of the school. Higher percentages of post-primary principals compared to primary principals reported informing parents about overall academic achievement at least ‘2-3 times a year’.

Home School Community Liaison (HSCL)

At primary level, two Band 1 schools and one Band 2 school had not appointed a HSCL coordinator at the time of survey completion. All surveyed principals at post-primary level had appointed a HSCL coordinator (Table 3).

Table 3: Percentages of school principals indicating that a HSCL was appointed at the time of the survey and rating the perceived value of HSCL as high/very high, medium, low/no value.

	Appointed	Very high / high value	Medium value	Low / no value
Band 1	95 %	91 %	6 %	3 %
Band 2	98 %	86 %	11 %	-
Post-primary	100 %	100 %	-	-

Principal perceptions of the value of the HSCL coordinator, relative to other supports under DEIS, were positive with almost all principals indicating that they viewed the perceived value of HSCL coordinators as ‘very high/high value’. A small percentage of principals in Band 1 schools rated the value of the HSCL coordinator as ‘low/no value’, citing issues such as the timing of recruitment, the adequacy of shared HSCL posts and orientation to the role for newly appointed HSCL Coordinators.

Principals also provided examples of how HSCL Coordinators had improved the involvement of parents. Positive impacts were reported across a number of themes where principals reported that HSCL Coordinators had:

- Encouraged and strengthened communication between schools/parents/teachers.
- Provided training and/or support activities for parents.
- Identified and supported the needs of targeted students.
- Led to improvements in punctuality/absenteeism/retention.
- Liaised with other agencies/local community/other schools.
- Referred parents to other agencies.

Illustrative quotes provided in Box 1 highlight some of the positive comments from principals on the impact of HSCL Coordinators in their school.

Box 1: Positive impacts of HSCL Coordinators

Home visits are crucial in linking with parents particularly where there is a lack of engagement with the school. (Band 1)

This is a most valuable post and to be honest I don't know how we managed in the past. I used to deal with all the issues myself in the past which took a considerable amount of time. (Band 1)

This has begun to lead to greater involvement in parent-teacher meetings of these parents and in their involvement in organised activities in the school. (Band 2)

Parents are happier to attend parent-teacher meetings and engage in the area of attendance with class teachers. (Band 2)

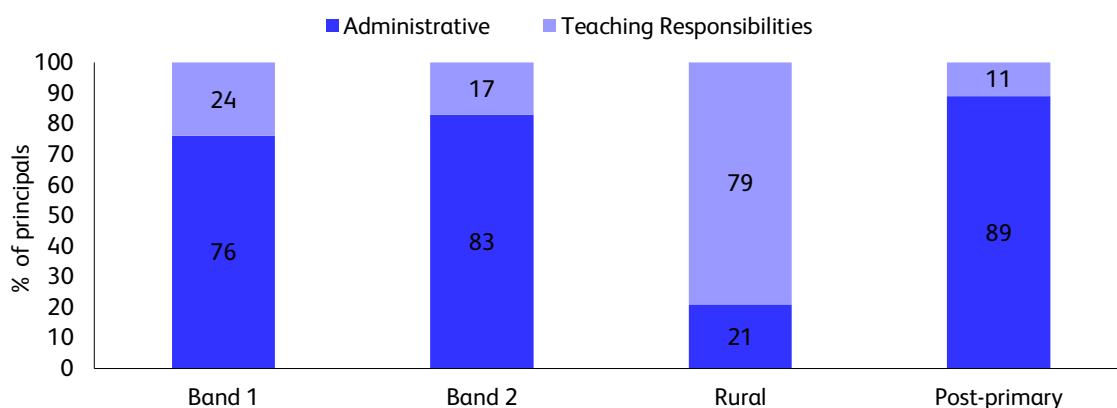
Home visits have greatly contributed to partnership with parents and monitoring the wellbeing, attendance and attainment of students. (Post-primary)

The principal: experience and professional development

Role

At primary level, most principals in Band 1 and Band 2 schools were Administrative Principals. This differed for principals in Rural schools as most had teaching responsibilities. Almost all principals at post-primary level were Administrative Principals, with only 3 (11 %) reporting that they also had teaching responsibilities (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Role of principals



Experience

The survey asked about principals' professional experience, including the years worked as a teacher in any school, as a principal in any school and the years working as a principal in a DEIS school (Table 4).

Table 4: Principals' years of experience

Experience	School type	1 year (my first year) %	2-5 years %	6-15 years %	More than 16 years %
Year(s) as a teacher in any school	Band 1	5	0	22	73
	Band 2	7	2	17	74
	Rural	3	3	22	73
	Post-primary	0	0	26	74
Year(s) as a principal in any school	Band 1	14	16	46	24
	Band 2	19	21	30	30
	Rural	8	32	39	21
	Post-primary	30	30	33	7
Year(s) working as a principal in a DEIS school	Band 1	89	8	3	0
	Band 2	90	3	5	2
	Rural	88	8	3	1
	Post-primary	89	7	4	0

*Percentages may not sum to precisely 100 % due to rounding.

- Over 70 % of principals in both primary and post-primary schools had more than 16 years of experience as a teacher in any school. This indicates that the majority of principals were experienced teachers.
- No post-primary principals reported having worked for five years or fewer as a teacher.
- A higher percentage of post-primary principals (30 %) indicated that they were in their first year as principal. This was comparatively less common at primary level where just 8 % of principals in Rural schools, 14 % of Band 1 and 19 % of Band 2 principals reported being in their first year as principal.
- Most principals at both levels were in their first year as principal in a school designated as DEIS, reflecting the recent admission of their current school to the DEIS programme. A small minority of principals reported having additional previous experience as a principal of a DEIS school. This finding shows that DEIS action planning was likely new to a very large majority of survey respondents.

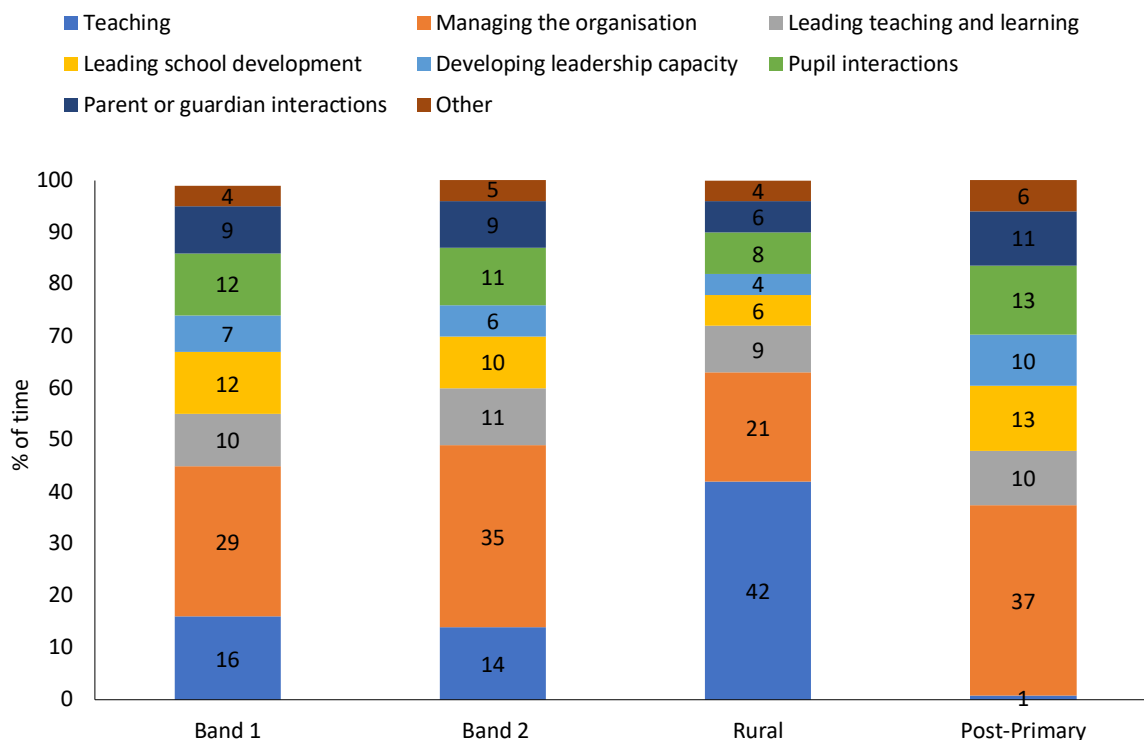
Time use of principals

In the survey, principals were asked to estimate the proportion of time they spent on different activities associated with their role. Figure 6 shows the average proportion of time reported by principals for each of the different activities.¹⁹

- Principals in Rural primary schools reported that they spent a good proportion of their time on teaching (42 %). This activity was less common in Band 1 (16 %) and Band 2 (14 %) schools, while post-primary principals reported spending a very small proportion of their time on average on teaching (1 %). This is in line with the earlier finding that the majority of principals in Rural schools had teaching responsibilities while this was much less common for post-primary principals.

¹⁹ While the option 'Interactions with local and regional agencies' was presented separately to principals in the questionnaire, a very small proportion of time was spent on average on such interactions. Thus, in Figure 6, 'other' comprises 'interactions with local and regional agencies' as well as other unspecified activities.

Figure 6: Reported time use of principals



- Principals in Band 1, Band 2 and post-primary schools reported spending the largest percentage of their time on managing the organisation (29 %, 35 % and 37 %, respectively). Principals in Rural schools spent 21 % of their time on average on this activity.
- On average, principals spent a somewhat greater proportion of their time on leading teaching and learning, leading school development or student interaction than on activities such as developing leadership capacity or interaction with local and regional agencies.

Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

The survey captured principals’ experiences with, and perceptions of, their own professional development and their participation in CPD related to school leadership. In addition, principals identified the priority areas of need for their professional development.

CPD in the year pre-entry to DEIS and since entry to DEIS²⁰

Principals indicated the kinds of professional development opportunities they participated in activities in the school year 2021/22 and in the school year 2022/23 (Table 5).²¹

20 It is not possible to assess the impact of reduced CPD provision in 2020/21 (as a result of COVID-19) on demand and uptake of CPD in 2021/22; i.e., it is not possible to determine whether uptake of CPD in 2021/22 may have been atypical and higher than normal as a result of lower levels of provision and uptake in prior years as a result of COVID-19. Thus, comparisons in this section between 2021/22 and 2022/23 should be taken as broad indicators of trends only rather than as an assessment of the impact of DEIS on CPD uptake.

21 As previously indicated, tests of statistical significance have not been conducted. Furthermore, any changes observed between the academic years cannot be attributed to school entry into DEIS and wider contextual factors should be borne in mind, e.g., the impact of COVID-19 restrictions on the provision of in-person CPD at various time points in recent years.

Courses, seminars or workshops

- The most common areas for CPD related to subject matter or teaching methods and leadership or management. The percentages of principals who participated were lower in all school contexts since entry to DEIS, with the exception of principals in Band 1 schools where the percentage who engaged in CPD in leadership was higher in 2022/23 than in 2021/22.
- Over half of principals took part in CPD related to staff wellbeing. Participation was higher in Band 1 and Rural schools in 2022/23 than in 2021/22. Similar percentages of principals reported involvement in CPD for student wellbeing and this increased in Band 1 schools since entry to DEIS.
- About half of principals in all schools participated in CPD related to the teaching of students with Special Educational Needs, inclusion or classroom management. The percentages of principals who engaged in these activities were lower in 2022/23, with the exception of principals in Band 2 schools where a small increase was observed in the percentage participating in CPD for inclusion.
- Across all schools, lower percentages of principals reported having participated in CPD related to working with parents, teaching English as an additional language or developing a culturally responsive school compared to other courses/training options. However, there were some increases in participation in these areas observed in Band 1 schools between 2021/22 and 2022/23 and a consistent level of participation observed at post-primary level.

Table 5: Participation in CPD activities, pre entry to DEIS and since entry to DEIS

	Band 1 %		Band 2 %		Rural %		Post-primary %	
	2021/22	2022/23	2021/22	2022/23	2021/22	2022/23	2021/22	2022/23
Courses, seminars or workshops:								
Subject matter, teaching methods	81	78	75	71	79	70	85	69
Leadership or management	81	83	89	78	70	66	93	85
Staff wellbeing	71	73	64	60	54	56	70	69
Student wellbeing (social and emotional needs)	64	73	68	67	69	60	81	69
The teaching of students with Special Educational Needs	68	46	76	43	64	49	78	69
Inclusion	54	51	55	57	42	40	69	63
Classroom management	46	35	37	32	38	23	41	8
Working with parents	41	38	47	50	36	34	33	33
Teaching English as an Additional Language	31	35	33	26	16	22	22	22
Developing a culturally responsive school	24	27	19	23	23	23	37	38
Other activities:								
Reading professional literature	89	81	82	75	72	64	85	81
Participation in a network of principals	73	86	72	79	67	71	65	78
Education conferences	65	62	63	67	48	48	81	96
A formal qualification programme	30	3	35	5	19	7	19	7
Peer/self-observation and coaching	27	24	47	40	30	27	41	44
Research	19	14	32	20	24	20	30	26
Other	12	19	10	13	10	12	22	17

% Lower ■ % Same ■ % Higher ■

Other CPD activities

- Focusing on CPD activities not classified as courses, seminars or workshops, the most frequently reported activity was reading professional literature. Most principals across all schools indicated that they had engaged in this activity; however, rates were lower for all in 2022/23 than in 2021/22.

- The percentages of principals who participated in a network of principals were higher in 2022/23 than in 2021/22 in all school contexts.
- About a half of principals engaged with education conferences at primary level. The percentage was higher at post-primary level and more principals reported having engaged in this activity in 2022/23.
- Less than half of principals engaged with activities such as formal qualification or peer/self-observation and coaching. The percentages of principals who engaged with research was lower in most instances in 2022/23 compared to 2021/22.
- In the ‘other’ category, principals included activities such as the *Friends for Life* programme, emotion coaching, in-school discussions and DEIS seminars.

CPD on leadership

Principals were asked about their previous and intended participation in CPD opportunities related to leadership (Table 6).

Table 6: Participation in CPD for leadership (Percentages of principals)

Activity	School type	I have completed this CPD	I have started, but not yet completed	I would like to, but not yet started	I do not intend to do this	Not applicable
Misneach	Band 1	70	0	16	0	14
	Band 2	63	12	9	4	12
	Rural	65	11	4	9	12
	Post-primary	54	19	8	4	15
A postgraduate or professional diploma	Band 1	46	0	16	24	14
	Band 2	39	4	25	27	5
	Rural	26	2	20	45	7
	Post-primary	50	4	12	19	15
Forbairt	Band 1	19	3	68	3	8
	Band 2	28	4	49	11	9
	Rural	14	1	44	25	16
	Post-primary	27	4	46	15	8
Tánaiste	Band 1	5	0	8	8	78
	Band 2	4	2	11	16	68
	Rural	6	1	7	17	70
	Post-primary	54	0	0	0	46
Meitheal	Band 1	5	3	51	19	22
	Band 2	13	5	43	20	20
	Rural	3	2	45	31	20
	Post-primary	15	8	31	15	31
Comhar	Band 1	0	0	16	8	76
	Band 2	2	0	16	9	74
	Rural	2	0	8	18	73
	Post-primary	4	4	8	12	73

- The most frequently completed CPD on leadership was Misneach (a two-year programme aimed at developing the knowledge, skills and attitudes of newly appointed principals). Participation in Misneach was reported by over half of principals in all schools.
- Half of post-primary principals completed a post-graduate or professional diploma; the percentages were lower at primary level and lowest for principals of Rural schools. A higher percentage of principals in Rural schools indicated that they did not intend to do a postgraduate or professional diploma compared to principals of other schools.
- About a quarter of principals had completed Forbairt (a one-year programme aimed at experienced school leaders to enhance their leadership knowledge, skills and capacity through professional development). About half of principals expressed a desire to undertake this programme in the future.
- Just over half of principals at post-primary level completed Tánaiste (a leadership-training programme for newly appointed deputy principals/acting deputy principals) compared to only a small minority of principals at primary level.
- Completion rates of the two middle leadership programmes Comhar and Meitheal programme were low for principals in all schools. Most principals reported that these programmes were not applicable to them.

CPD priorities

Principals were asked to identify their priorities ('high' level of need) in different areas of professional development (Table 7).

Table 7: Percentage of principals' who reported a 'high' level of need for professional development

Area	Band 1	Band 2	Rural	Post-primary
Whole-school support to implement curriculum changes	57	42	61	27
Financial management	41	36	25	38
Responsible use of digital technologies/cyber bullying	38	27	22	35
Teacher wellbeing	35	32	35	23
Human resource management	32	30	19	27
Using data for effective planning/school improvement	30	29	25	42
Social and emotional skills	28	29	23	23
Assessment of student's Special Educational Needs	27	29	18	27
Leadership and management support for principals	24	23	27	35
Student wellbeing	22	27	24	19
Teaching students with Special Educational Needs	22	30	14	42
Critical incident	19	7	11	8
Numeracy	19	23	17	19
Student discipline and behaviour management	19	18	10	19
Literacy	16	20	14	15
Inclusion of students with Special Educational Needs in wider school community	11	20	15	38
Providing effective feedback to colleagues on teaching	11	23	13	23
Observation of teaching	5	11	8	23
Child protection	5	7	8	4
Other curricular areas	5	14	11	8
Improving professional collaboration among teachers	5	13	13	27

- In terms of CPD needs, a mixed pattern of need was reported by principals.
- Primary principles reported having a 'high' level of need for CPD in whole school support to implement curriculum changes.
- The areas of need most commonly selected by post-primary principals were using data for effective planning and school improvement and teaching students with Special Educational Needs.
- Less than half of all principals reported a 'high' level of need for CPD related to financial management, responsible use of digital technologies/cyber bullying, teacher wellbeing or human resource management.
- Very few principals in any school context expressed a need for CPD in areas such as observation of teaching, child protection or improving professional collaboration among teachers.

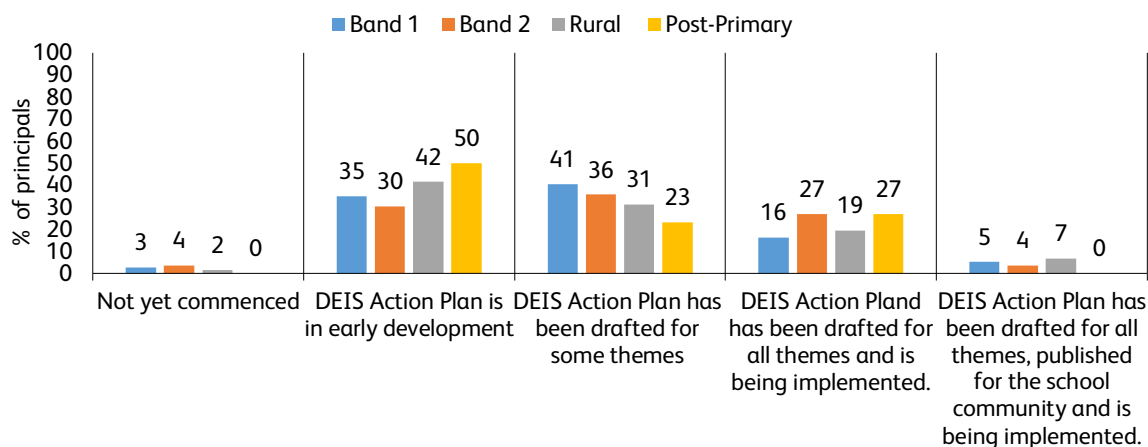
DEIS action planning: Getting started

This section focuses on the organisation and oversight of DEIS action planning for school improvement including plans for DEIS grant spending and views on new DEIS supports likely to have the 'greatest' impact.

Stage in the DEIS action plan development

Figure 7 shows variation across schools in their progress with DEIS action planning at the time of the survey.

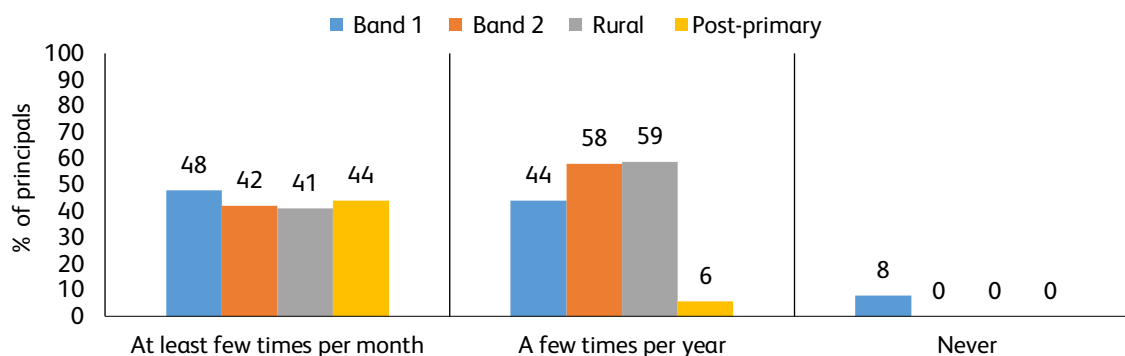
Figure 7: Stages of DEIS action planning development



- A small minority of principals in primary schools reported that their DEIS action plan had not yet commenced. All principals at post-primary level had commenced work on the plan.
- Half of post-primary principals reported that their DEIS action plan was in early development and less than half of primary principals indicated the same.
- Over one-quarter of both Band 2 and post-primary school principals reported that their DEIS action plan has been drafted for some themes and being implemented; the percentages were lower in both in Band 1 and Rural schools.
- Less than half of primary school principals indicated that their DEIS action plan has been drafted for some themes. The percentage was lower at post-primary level.
- A small minority of principals in primary schools reported that their DEIS action plan has been drafted for all themes, published for school community and is being implemented. No principals in post-primary schools reported having reached this stage of development.

DEIS action planning team

Principals were asked if their school had a DEIS action planning team and to indicate the frequency of formally scheduled meetings of the DEIS action planning team (Figure 8).

Figure 8: DEIS action planning team in place and frequency of DEIS team meetings

- Almost all post-primary schools (96 %) reported that a designated DEIS action planning team was in place, with most of the principals of Band 1 (70 %) and Band 2 (77 %) schools in the same position. Just over half of principals in Rural (59 %) schools reported having a DEIS action planning team.
- There was a similar pattern of meeting frequency across all schools with less than a half of principals indicating that they their team met ‘at least a few times a month’.
- Just over half of principals in Band 2, Rural and post-primary schools reported that the DEIS team met ‘a few times a year’, with lower percentages in Band 1.
- Very few principals of Band 1 schools reported that the DEIS action planning team ‘never’ met since entry to DEIS.

Members of the school community involved in DEIS planning

Principals were asked to indicate the level of involvement of members of the school community in four areas of DEIS planning: setting targets; selecting initiatives or interventions; implementing initiatives or interventions; and monitoring progress towards targets. Table 8 shows the involvement of school members in DEIS planning in primary schools.

- Almost all principals and a very large majority of Deputy Principals were reported to be involved in all four areas of DEIS planning. One exception to this was the slightly lower percentage of Deputy principals involved in monitoring progress toward targets in Rural schools (88 %).
- The involvement of Assistant Principals and HSCL Coordinators was broadly similar in Band 1 and Band 2 schools with most of them reported to be involved in all areas of DEIS planning. There was an exception in Rural schools, where just over half of Assistant Principals were involved in selecting initiatives or interventions, implementing initiatives or interventions and monitoring progress towards targets.
- There was a similar pattern in Band 1 and Band 2 schools with high percentages (80-100 %) of principals reporting involvement of Subject/mainstream or Special Education teachers in all four areas of DEIS planning; the percentages were somewhat lower for Subject/Mainstream teachers in Rural schools.
- Over half of principals reported that SNAs were involved in setting targets (Band 1), selecting initiatives or interventions (Band 1) and implementing initiatives or interventions (across all primary schools).

Table 8: Reported involvement of members of the school community in elements of DEIS planning in primary schools

Member	Setting targets %			Selecting initiatives or interventions %			Implementing initiatives or interventions %			Monitoring progress towards targets %		
	Band 1	Band 2	Rural	Band 1	Band 2	Rural	Band 1	Band 2	Rural	Band 1	Band 2	Rural
Principal	100	100	99	100	100	99	100	95	98	100	100	96
Deputy Principal	100	98	92	100	95	91	100	96	90	100	96	88
Assistant Principal	100	87	72	81	95	54	81	93	54	78	91	52
Subject / Mainstream teacher(s)	100	87	72	100	83	74	100	93	74	94	91	71
Special Education teacher(s)	97	91	84	97	91	87	97	96	86	89	92	86
HSCL Coordinator	87	89	0	89	87	0	89	91	0	89	87	0
SNA(s)	57	28	46	57	34	47	73	53	67	16	15	21
Board of Management	51	44	54	46	41	50	51	50	50	73	72	62
SCP Coordinator	41	32	3	44	42	4	42	40	4	65	40	53
Parents	33	22	37	39	25	41	56	38	47	24	28	38
Students	30	21	38	38	36	48	47	42	55	25	39	45
School secretary	11	8	16	11	4	16	27	23	27	8	8	5
Caretaker	8	2	4	8	2	4	14	11	8	8	8	5
Chaplain	3	4	3	5	2	3	5	4	5	3	0	4
Librarian	0	2	1	0	2	1	0	0	1	3	0	1

- Board of Management involvement showed a slightly different pattern to that of SNAs. Approximately half of principals indicated that members of the Board of Management were engaged in setting targets; selecting initiatives or interventions; or implementing initiatives or interventions. Higher percentages of principals in Band 1 schools reported Board of Management involvement in monitoring progress towards targets.
- Less than half of principals reported that parents or students were involved in setting targets or monitoring progress. More than half of principals in Band 1 schools indicated that parents were involved in implementing initiatives or interventions. More than half of principals of Rural schools reported student involvement in implementing initiatives or interventions.
- Other members of the school community such as the school secretary, chaplain, caretaker or librarian were reported by principals to be involved in some of the DEIS planning areas but percentages of principals reporting involvement by these groups were generally low.

Table 9 shows the reported involvement of members of the school community in the various areas of DEIS planning in post-primary schools.

- All principals reported involvement of Deputy Principals in the four areas of DEIS planning.

Table 9: Involvement of school members in DEIS planning elements in post-primary schools

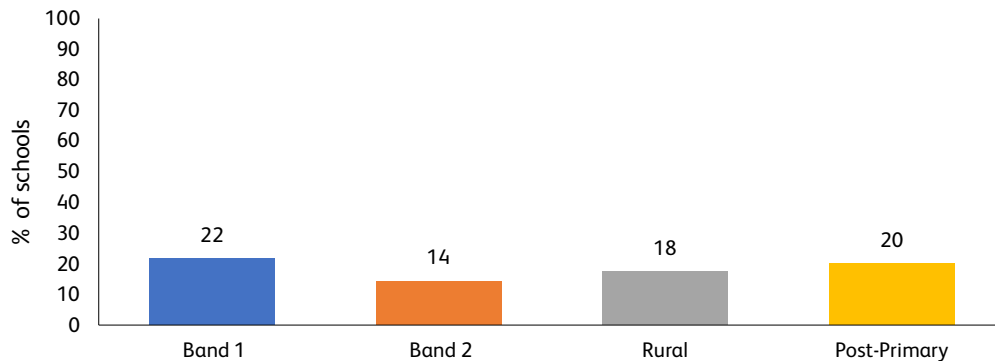
Member	Setting targets %	Selecting initiative or interventions %	Implementing initiatives or interventions %	Monitoring progress towards targets %
Principal	100	100	92	100
Deputy Principal	100	100	100	100
HSCL Coordinator	100	100	100	96
Assistant Principal	96	96	96	96
Special Education teacher(s)	96	96	96	92
Guidance Counsellor(s)	96	88	96	92
Subject /Mainstream teacher(s)	92	92	100	96
Year head(s)	79	83	88	88
Board of Management	54	46	48	92
SNA(s)	48	48	50	52
Students	29	38	29	46
JCSP Coordinator	22	22	18	21
Chaplain	21	13	17	17
SCP Coordinator	17	30	26	22
Parents	13	22	35	30
School secretary	4	4	4	4
Librarian	0	0	0	0
Caretaker	0	0	4	0

- Similarly, a very high level of involvement of principals and HSCL Coordinators in DEIS planning was reported.
- Over 90 % of principals reported involvement in various aspects of planning of school staff in including Assistant Principals, Special Education teacher(s), guidance counsellor(s) or subject/mainstream teacher(s) .
- The majority of principals reported the involvement of Year Heads in DEIS planning.
- There appears to be a different pattern of engagement for members of the Board of Management with a higher level of participation reported for monitoring progress towards targets (92 %) compared to the other areas of DEIS planning.
- About half of principals reported that SNAs were involved in all four areas of planning.
- Principals reported lower levels of involvement of the JCSP Coordinator, chaplain, SPC coordinator or parents in DEIS planning.
- Principals reported very little or no involvement of the school secretary, librarian or caretaker in DEIS planning at post-primary level.

Support or assistance in relation to DEIS action planning

Principals were also asked to indicate if any representatives of the wider school community (e.g., voluntary agencies, local community organisations or industry) were involved in DEIS action planning in their school (Figure 9).

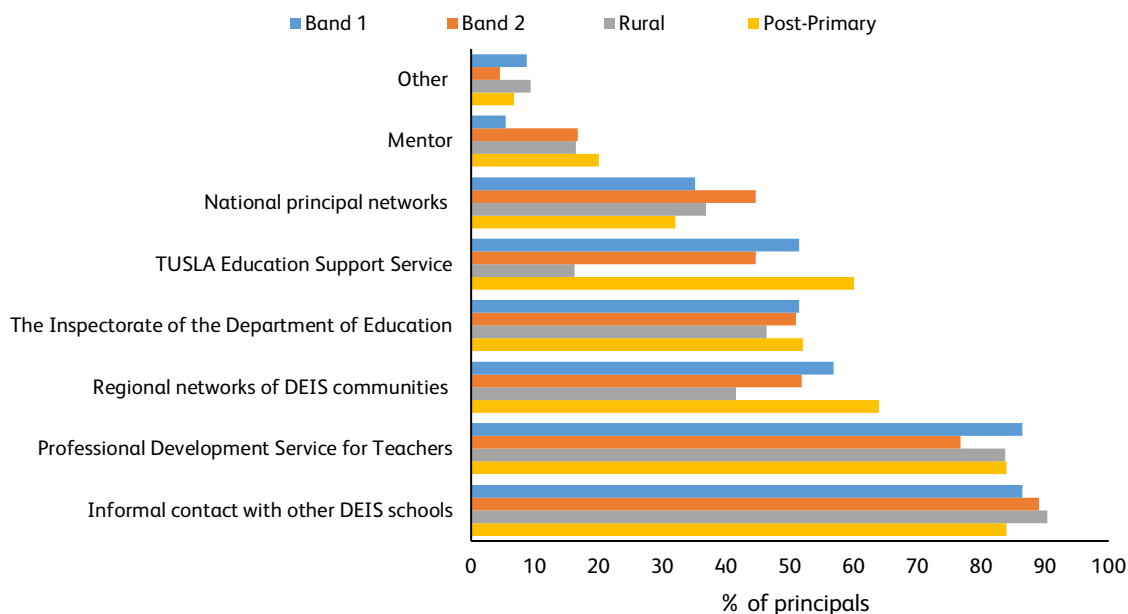
Figure 9: Percentages of schools where wider community representatives participate in DEIS



- Less than a quarter of all schools had a member of the wider community participating in DEIS planning in their school with Band 1 reported to have the highest level of participation from members of the wider school community (22 %) and Band 2 reported to have the lowest level of engagement (14 %).

To better understand the supports provided to schools in relation to DEIS action planning, principals were asked to indicate the types of support or assistance they received since the school was brought into the DEIS programme (Figure 10).

Figure 10: Support/assistance from the wider community in DEIS action planning



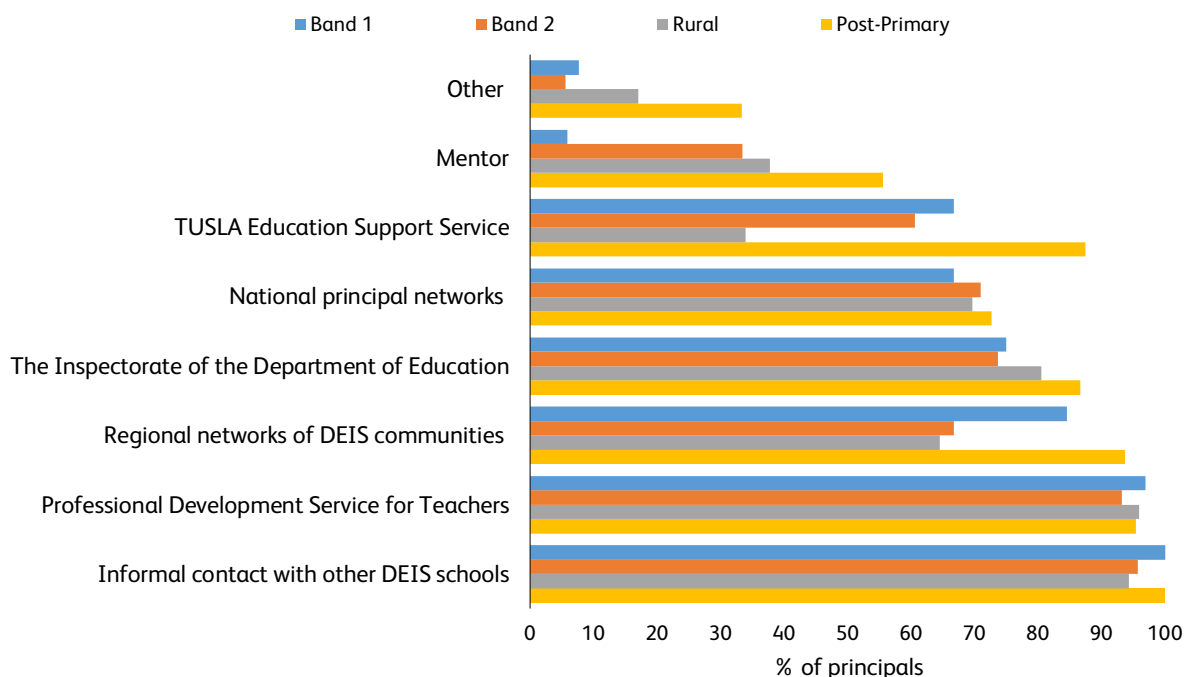
- Most principals in all school contexts indicated that they had received support or assistance from informal contact with other DEIS schools or the PDST.²²

²² Since September 2023, the PDST has been incorporated into Oide (www.oide.ie).

- Band 2 had lower percentages of principals (77%) reporting that they had received support from the PDST compared to principals in other schools.
- The next most popular form of support for post-primary schools was regional networks of DEIS communities and the TESS (64% and 60%, respectively), followed by the inspectorate of the Department of Education, National principal networks and mentor.
- The pattern of receiving support/assistance from the wider community for Band 1 was similar to Band 2 with over half of principals reporting that they had received support from regional networks of DEIS communities, the inspectorate of the Department of Education or national principal networks. Less than half principals indicated that they had received support from the TESS or a national principal network.
- Relative to the other forms of support available, principals of Rural schools were most likely to report having received support from informal contact with other DEIS schools (90%).
- Principals in Rural schools were least likely to indicate that they had received support from the TESS or through a mentor programme, at 16% and 4% respectively.
- Principals had the opportunity to list additional supports they had availed of. Examples included the local principal network and DEIS workshops.

Principals were asked to rate the usefulness of the supports they had received (from ‘very useful’ to ‘not useful’). Figure 11 shows only the combined ‘very useful/somewhat useful’ values for each school type.

Figure 11: Percentages of principals who used supports and found them ‘very useful/somewhat useful’



- Regarding the various agencies/parties supporting schools, most principals were very positive about the support/assistance they had received.
- Almost all principals indicated that informal contact with other DEIS schools or support from

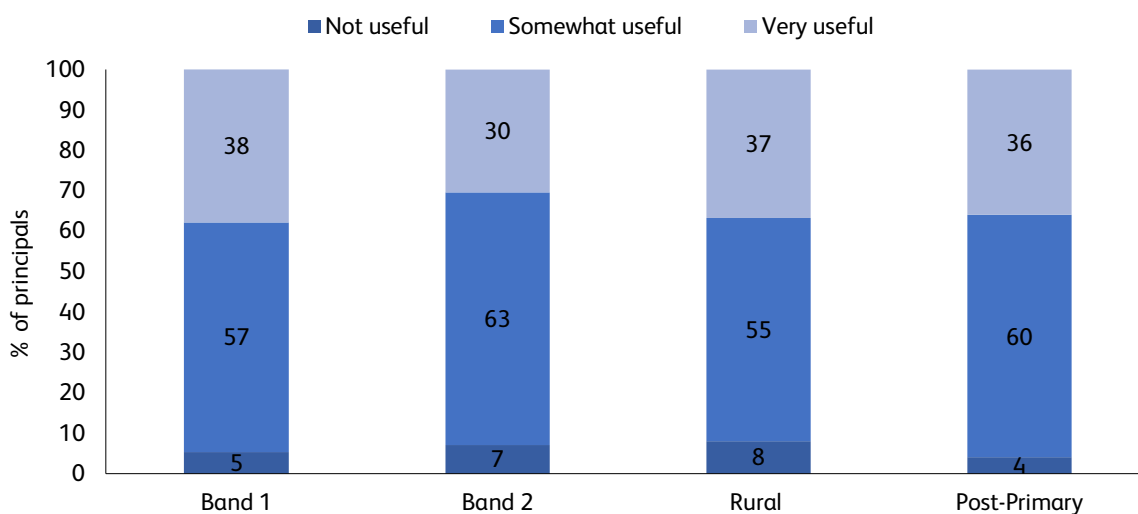
the PDST were ‘very useful/somewhat useful’. Principals of Urban Band 1 and post-primary schools were more likely than their counterparts in other contexts to rate as ‘very useful/somewhat useful’ the regional network of DEIS communities. Principals in Band 2 and Rural schools were somewhat more likely than their counterparts in other contexts to rate the Inspectorate of the Department of Education as ‘‘very useful/somewhat useful’.

- There was some variation across school contexts in the extent to which principals rated the usefulness of the TESS, with percentages ranging from 34 % of principals in DEIS Rural schools to 88 % of post-primary principals.
- A majority of principals across contexts rated as ‘very’ or ‘somewhat’ useful the national principals’ network.
- There was considerable variation across school contexts in the extent to which mentor programmes were deemed useful.

Experience of the School Self-Evaluation (SSE) process

Principals were also asked to indicate the extent to which their previous experience of the SSE process had been useful in developing the DEIS action plan in their school (Figure 12).

Figure 12: Usefulness of school self-evaluation in developing DEIS action planning

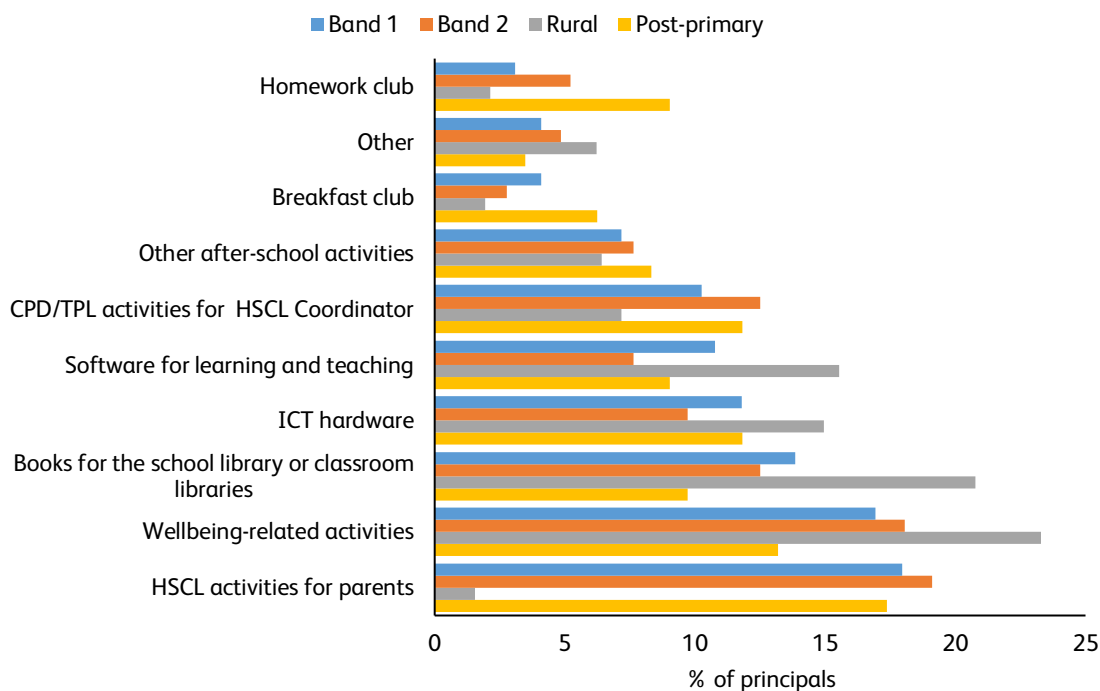


- Over 90 % of principals across school contexts were positive about how their prior experience of SSE helped with the development of their DEIS action plan.
- At least one-in-three principals reported that self-evaluation was ‘very useful’.
- More than half of principals across school contexts indicated that SSE experience was ‘somewhat useful’. There were small variations in the percentages across school contexts.
- Only a small minority of principals reported that self-evaluation was ‘not useful’ in developing their DEIS action plan.

Planned DEIS grant expenditure

Principals were asked to identify the areas in which the school planned to spend the allocated DEIS grant (Figure 13).

Figure 13: Areas of planned DEIS grant expenditure



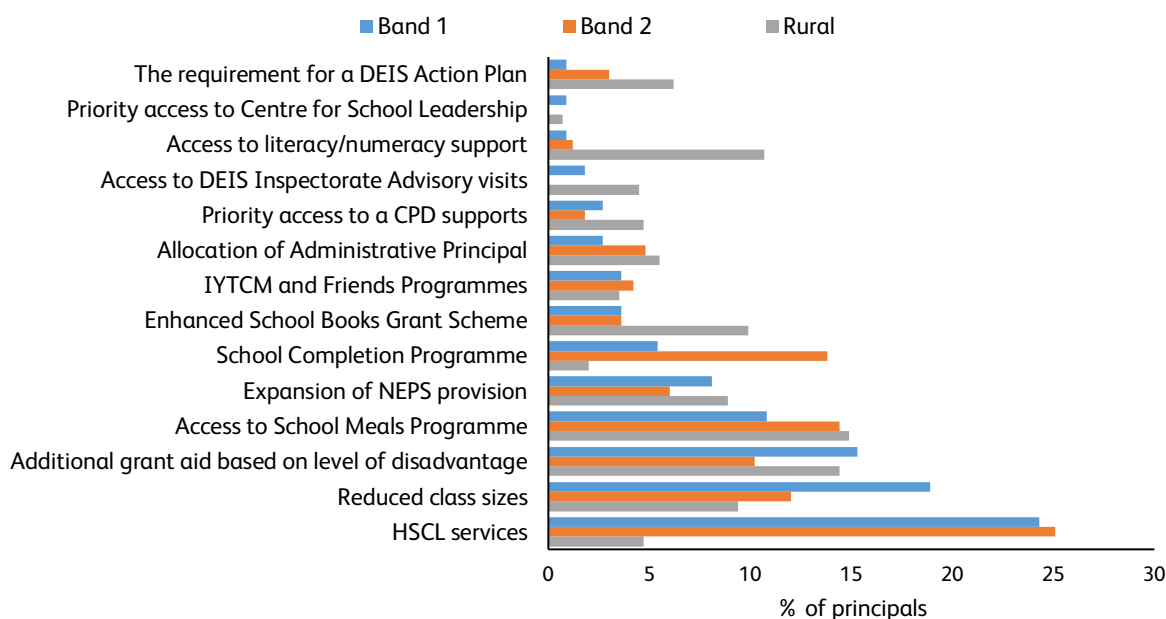
- Across school contexts, the main priority areas focused on wellbeing activities, activities for parents and infrastructure or facilities for learning and teaching.
- For principals in Urban Band 1, Urban Band 2 and post-primary schools, expenditure on HSCL activities for parents was most widely identified as a priority.
- Band 1 and Band 2 principals identified very similar spending priorities, with similar percentages of principals in both contexts reporting that the DEIS grant would be spent on ‘HSCL activities for parents’, ‘wellbeing related activities’ or ‘books for school/classroom library’.
- Principals in DEIS Rural schools indicated that priority areas were ‘wellbeing activities’, ‘books for the school/classroom library’ and ‘software for learning and teaching’.
- Very few principals reported that they intended to spend the DEIS grant on homework clubs, breakfast clubs or after-school activities.

DEIS supports likely to have the ‘greatest’ impact

Acknowledging that the DEIS programme is multifaceted the survey sought to examine principals’ perspectives on the individual supports most likely to have an impact in their school.

Principals were asked to indicate three of the supports offered under DEIS which they considered likely to have the ‘greatest’ impact.²³ Some variation was evident in the responses of Urban and principals in Rural schools at primary level; this is likely a function of the differences in DEIS supports provided in the two contexts (Figure 14).

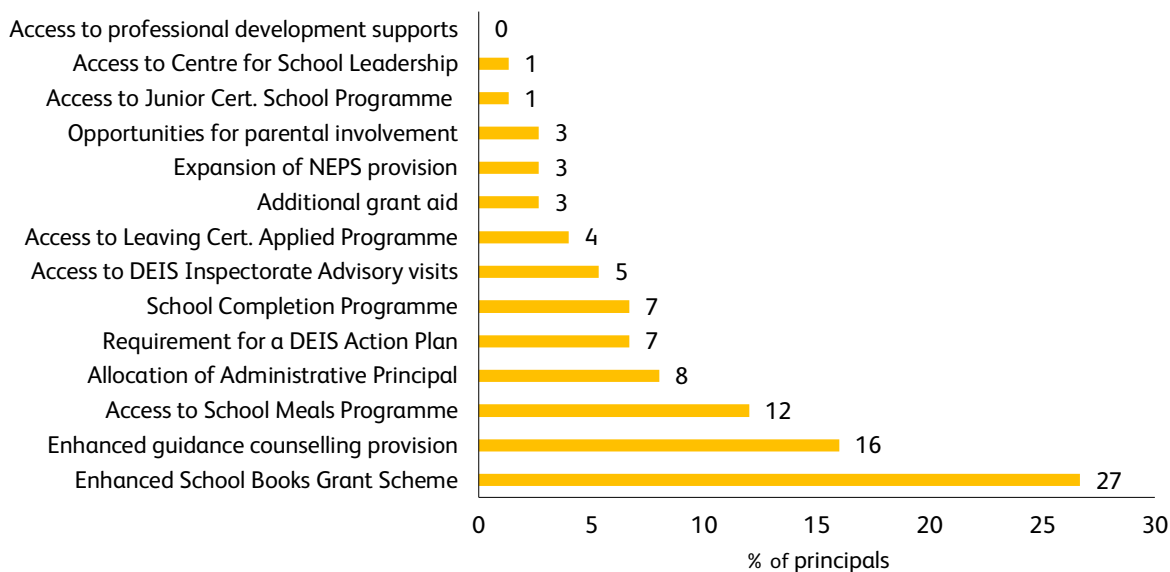
²³ Principals were provided with a list of supports for students from disadvantaged backgrounds offered under DEIS along with an explanation that not all of the supports listed are applicable in all DEIS bands. They were asked to select three DEIS supports that they considered to be most likely to have the ‘greatest’/‘least’ impact in their school. Note that principals were able to select DEIS supports even if those were not available in their DEIS band (e.g., it was possible for DEIS principals in Rural schools to select reduced class sizes although these are not provided to DEIS Rural schools). In this way, responses may best be considered to reflect principals’ perceptions on the most valuable DEIS supports, even if these were not available in their DEIS band.

Figure 14: DEIS supports likely to have the ‘greatest’ impact: Primary

- The support most frequently identified as one of those likely to have the ‘greatest’ impact was the Home School Community Liaison service. Over 25 % of Band 1 and a similar percentage of Band 2 principals identified this support as one likely to have the ‘greatest’ impact.
- For principals in Urban Band 1 schools, reduced class sizes were considered to be one of the supports likely to have the ‘greatest’ impact.
- For principals in Urban Band 2 schools, access to the School Meals Programme and the School Completion Programme were considered to be important supports with 14 % of principals identifying these supports as likely to have the ‘greatest’ impact.
- In Rural schools, the most beneficial support was deemed to be access to the School Meals Programme (15 %).
- Principals in DEIS Rural schools were more likely than their urban counterparts to identify enhanced school books grant scheme²⁴, additional grant aid based on level of disadvantage or access to literacy/numeracy support as among the most impactful supports. This likely reflects the different supports available to Urban DEIS schools where HSCL was identified as being of particular importance.
- Very few primary principals considered that the ‘greatest’ impact would be brought about through priority access to the Centre for School Leadership, priority to a range of professional development supports, Incredible Years Teacher Classroom Management or the Friends for Life programme.

Figure 15 shows post-primary principals’ views on the DEIS supports likely to have the ‘greatest’ impact.

²⁴ The Free Primary Schoolbooks Scheme was introduced in Ireland removing the cost from families of funding schoolbooks for children enrolled in primary schools and special schools. The scheme commenced in the 2023/24 school year after completion of this survey (Department of Education, 2023b).

Figure 15: DEIS supports likely to have the ‘greatest’ impact: Post-primary

- Over one-quarter of post-primary principals at post-primary level identified the enhanced School Books Grant scheme as one of the DEIS supports likely to have the ‘greatest’ impact. Enhanced guidance counselling provision and access to the School Meals Programme were selected by about one-sixth and one-eighth of principals, respectively.
- Only 8% of post-primary principals included the allocation of an administrative principal on lower enrolment and staffing figures as one of the DEIS supports likely to have the ‘greatest’ impact. Similarly, low percentages of principals (7%) included the requirement for a DEIS action plan or the School Completion Programme in their lists of top three supports.
- Very low percentages of principals identified the remaining DEIS supports as those likely to have the ‘greatest’ impact, i.e., low percentages included in their list of top three supports additional grant aid based on level of disadvantage, expansion of NEPS provision, opportunities for parental involvement or access to the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP).
- None of the post-primary principals indicated that priority access to CSL was likely to have the ‘greatest’ impact.

Action planning for school improvement and implementation

Principals were asked their perceptions of the extent to which their school engaged in various activities, including using data effectively, as part of DEIS action planning and implementation. Table 10 shows the percentages of principals who indicated that they did these activities ‘to a great extent’.

- DEIS action planning should involve using data effectively to identify focus areas and priorities for school improvement. Most principals across all schools reported using attendance data to inform initiatives to improve attendance. The majority (55%-68% across school contexts) consider that the school used achievement data effectively (e.g., examination results or standardised test scores) to identify students in need of support.

Table 10: Action planning for school improvement and implementation

'To a great extent'	Band 1 %	Band 2 %	Rural %	Post- primary %
Analysing data to inform plan				
Use attendance data to inform attendance initiatives	92	82	80	84
Use numeric data on achievement effectively to identify students in need of support	65	55	66	68
Include SMART targets related to desired improvements in learner outcomes	62	59	54	64
Use attitudinal data gathered from students to inform DEIS action planning	24	27	30	36
Use data gathered from parents to inform DEIS action planning	24	25	20	12
Identifying needs				
Identify students with the highest level of need for each of the DEIS themes	89	85	84	52
Use the Continuum of Support framework to target support in our school	78	66	71	64
Focus on student wellbeing	65	80	75	56
Focus on staff wellbeing	51	54	40	32
Engagement with teachers				
Place a strong emphasis at staff meetings on the school DEIS plan	62	52	48	80
Place a strong emphasis at staff meetings on understanding educational disadvantage	59	55	35	32
Ensure that teachers use the targets set in the DEIS plan to design specific learning experiences	57	54	45	52
Professional development				
Develop a dedicated plan for teachers' CPD/ TPL linked to DEIS plan	11	4	10	12
Review teachers' participation rates in CPD/ TPL	11	16	17	20
Review the impact of teacher participation in CPD/TPL	11	11	14	12

- As recommended by the DEIS planning process, over half of principals reported using SMART targets to improve outcomes for students.
- At primary level, about a quarter of principals reported that they used data from students or parents (e.g., surveys or interviews) to inform action planning. At post-primary level, a higher percentage of principals reported using student data for this purpose (36%) compared to parent data (12%). Attitudinal data from students or parents were reportedly less frequently than numeric data on achievement or attendance.
- Most principals reported that they identified the specific needs of students across the DEIS themes at primary level. However, this activity was reported by just half of the principals at

post-primary level which is noteworthy as this is considered central to DEIS planning.

- More than half of principals indicated that the Continuum of Support framework was employed to target the provision of educational supports in their schools.
- More principals in Band 2 and Rural schools compared to Band 1 schools reported a focus on student wellbeing in the action planning. Just over half of principals at post-primary level indicated that there was a focus on student wellbeing in DEIS action planning. One-third to half of principals reported a focus on staff wellbeing in DEIS action planning.
- Placing a strong emphasis at staff meetings on the DEIS plan was reported by most principals at post-primary level and more than half of principals in Band 1 schools. Percentages were somewhat lower in Band 2 and Rural schools. About half of principals reported that they aimed to ensure that teachers used the targets set in the DEIS plan to design specific learning experiences. There was less of a focus on understanding educational disadvantage at staff meetings with half of principals in Band 1 and Band 2 schools reporting this activity compared to only a small minority of principals in Rural and post-primary schools.
- Only a small minority of principals reported developing a plan for CPD linked with DEIS. Just a few principals reported that they reviewed CPD participation rates or the impact of CPD activities. This suggests that principals may need to consider professional development to a greater extent in the action planning process.

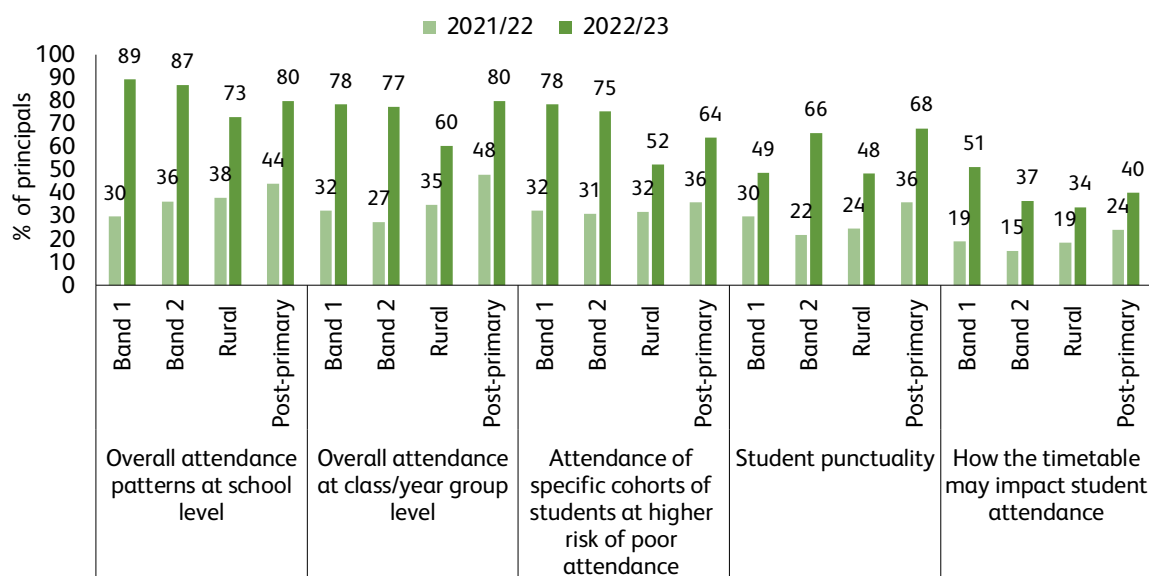
DEIS action planning: Themes and priorities

This section looks at both the progress and priorities across the themes identified under DEIS for school improvement. Principals also provided insights into school practices under these themes.

Attendance

For the school years 2021/22 (pre-DEIS) and 2022/23 (since entry to DEIS), principals indicated the extent to which their school prioritised the monitoring of attendance in a number of areas. Figure 16 shows the percentages of principals who rated these as 'high' priority pre-DEIS and since entry to DEIS.

Figure 16: Percentages of principals who rated these priorities as 'high' pre-DEIS and since entry to DEIS



- Monitoring of attendance patterns at both school and class/year level was considered a 'high' priority, with some evidence of a greater emphasis on this area in 2022/23 relative to 2021/22.
- Attendance of specific cohorts of students (e.g., Traveller or Roma students) was more likely to be rated as an area of 'high' priority in 2022/23 compared to 2021/22. The percentages of principals in Rural schools who identified this as a high priority was lower than in other school contexts. This may reflect the student profile of these schools; it was noted above that over half of DEIS principals in Rural schools indicated that they had no students from Traveller or Roma backgrounds. It may also reflect lower levels of absenteeism in general in rural schools relative to urban schools.²⁵ Prioritisation of the monitoring of student punctuality was also reported to have increased for all schools since entry to DEIS.
- Principals' consideration of how the timetable impacts student attendance was reported to have increased for all schools in 2022/23 relative to 2021/22.

Principals were asked to provide examples of any changes implemented in their school for the monitoring and analysis of attendance-related data. Open-ended responses were grouped into a number of themes as follows:

- Technology use: increased use of Apps/digital platforms to monitor punctuality and attendance.
- Dedicated staff: designation of HSCL Coordinators or other staff to oversee attendance.
- Monitoring: continued or increased use of data and reports.
- Modifications: changes to examinations, schedules and timetables.
- Rewards and incentives: for students to improve attendance.
- Identification of at-risk students: identify and provide support for students at risk of poor attendance.
- Liaison with parents: communication with parents (notifications/letters, meetings).

²⁵ https://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/AAR_SAR_2019_22.pdf

The quotes in Box 2 illustrate some of the activities reported by principals across these themes.

Box 2: Selected changes implemented in schools for the monitoring and analysis of attendance-related data

Duties of Deputy Principal to monitor attendance/punctuality explicitly for all students but in particular those most at risk. Various incentives and initiatives put in place to encourage and improve attendance. (Band 1)

We now take note of every child who comes in late and the time they arrive. This is put up on our Aladdin database. We have contacted parents and informed them of this new procedure. We use various incentives to bring children into school on time (e.g., breakfast club & class rewards). We have adjusted timetables to ensure children are not avoiding certain subjects at the start of each day. (Band 2)

Purchase of software (Aladdin). Designated time for roll calling, sending out text messages to parents of absent children. Principal and Deputy Principal regularly monitoring attendance and absences. Teachers taking steps to contact parents when children are absent without explanation after a couple of days. Incentives for improved attendance. (Rural)

HCSL home visits, daily check-ins with students, close monitoring of attendance patterns by Year Heads, scheduling of events and activities on Fridays/Mondays, regular school meetings and updates to parents, reward systems for attendance and participation. (Post-primary)

Rewarding monthly attendance in year groups. Evaluating high risk and targeting home visits by HSCL & SCP, Summer programmes in 2021 & 2022. (Post-primary)

Student transitions

Principals described the approach(es) taken by their school to support student transitions and adaptation (Table 11).

Table 11: Approaches to support the transition of students

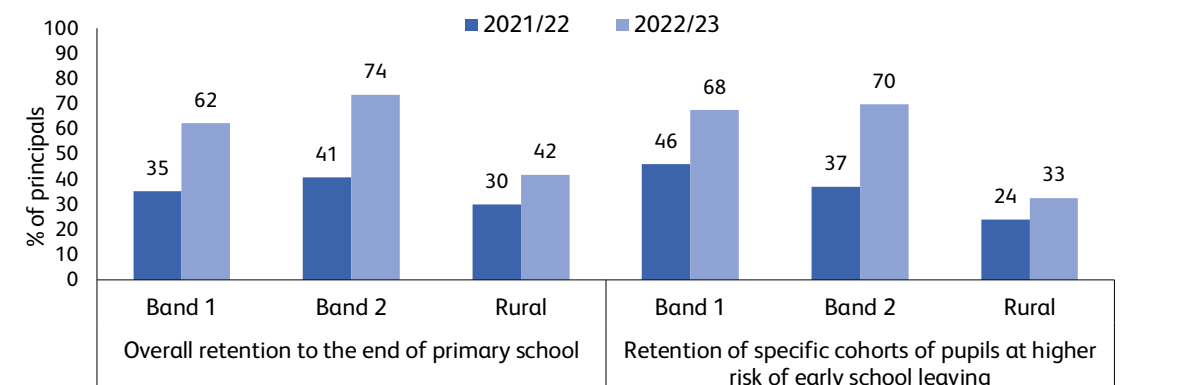
	School type	Implemented by individual teachers/groups of teachers %	Whole-school approach %	No approach used %
Strategies in the first term to help incoming students settle into the school	Band 1	65	35	0
	Band 2	50	50	0
	Rural	35	63	2
	Post-primary	12	88	0
Strategies in the first term to help all students to settle into their new class/year	Band 1	43	57	0
	Band 2	33	65	2
	Rural	31	67	2
	Post-primary	28	72	0
Strategies to help students who move to this school from another school in Ireland or elsewhere	Band 1	73	22	5
	Band 2	50	46	4
	Rural	39	56	4
	Post-primary	64	32	4
Strategies throughout the year to help all students adapt to their current education setting	Band 1	46	49	5
	Band 2	43	56	2
	Rural	36	62	2
	Post-primary	52	44	4
Strategies to help students prepare for their new class/ year next September	Band 1	49	43	8
	Band 2	41	52	7
	Rural	41	53	5
	Post-primary	52	36	12

- In terms of strategies to support incoming students to settle into schools, a clear preference for whole school approaches was evident at post-primary level where 88% of principals reported a whole school approach to strategies in the first term to help incoming students to settle. Greater variation was evident at primary level where both whole school approaches and approaches by individual teachers or groups of teachers were reported to be used by sizeable percentages of schools. About two-thirds of Band 1 principals indicated that approaches by individual teachers or groups of teachers were used for this purpose with one-third reporting a whole school approach. In contrast, one-third of principals in Rural schools indicated that individual approaches were used while two-thirds indicated that a whole school approach was adopted.
- Over half of the principals in all school contexts reported that the school took a whole school approach to the settling in of students into their new class/year during the first term.
- Strategies to support students transitioning to the current school from elsewhere were most likely to be implemented by individual teachers/groups of teachers in most schools with the exception of Rural schools where over half of principals reported a whole school approach.
- Ongoing support to help all students adapt to their current education setting was reported by half or more of the principals in Band 1, Band 2 and Rural schools; this was more likely to be led by individual teachers/groups of teachers at post-primary level.

Retention

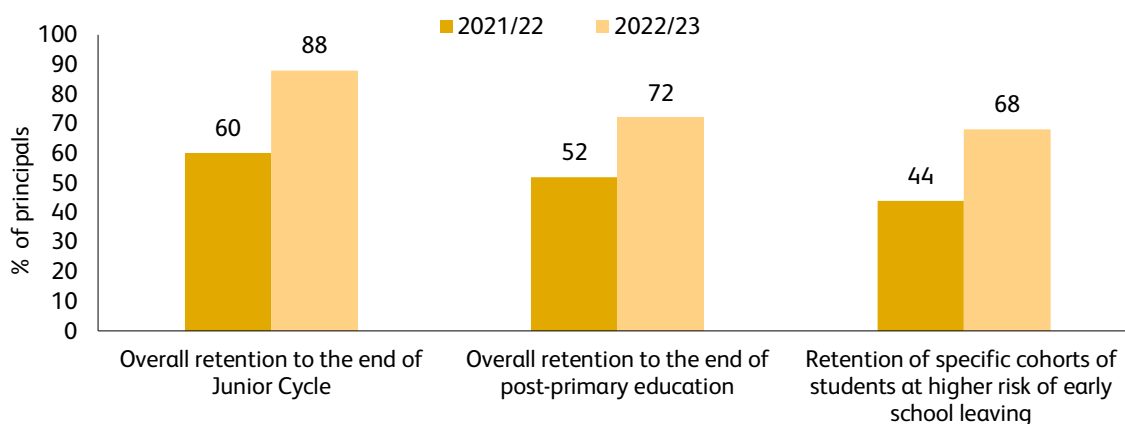
Principals indicated the extent to which their school prioritised the monitoring of student retention overall and for specific cohorts of students at risk of early school leaving (e.g., Traveller or Roma students). Figure 17 shows the percentages of principals at primary level who rated these as a ‘high’ priority prior to entry to DEIS (2021/22) and since entry to DEIS (2022/23). There was an increase in the percentages of primary principals who rated these as a ‘high’ priority in 2022/23 relative to 2021/22.

Figure 17: Percentages of principals who rated student retention as ‘high’ priority pre-DEIS and since entry to DEIS: Primary



Principals at the post-primary level indicated the extent to which their school prioritised the monitoring of student retention to the end of Junior Cycle, overall retention to the end of post-primary education and the retention of specific cohorts of students at risk of early school leaving. Figure 18 shows the percentages of principals at post-primary level who rated these as a ‘high’ priority pre-DEIS (2021/22) and since entry to DEIS (2022/23). Similar to the pattern at primary level, higher percentages of principals reported that this monitoring took place since entry to DEIS.

Figure 18: Percentages of principals who rated student retention as ‘high’ priority pre-DEIS and since entry to DEIS: Post-primary



Principals were asked to provide further information on the practices their school found most effective for supporting the retention of students at risk of early school leaving. Responses were categorised into a number of themes:

- Fostering communication with parents.
- Extra-curricular and variation in curricular activities, e.g., school tours and workshops.
- Offering rewards/incentives for students.
- Visits to local schools and linking with secondary schools (primary level).
- HSCL/SCP support and involvement.
- Work with other agencies (e.g., Tusla).

The following quotes illustrate some of the activities reported by principals related to supporting student retention (Box 3).

Box 3: Effective practices for supporting retention

Communication with the parents and post-primary school. Educational Welfare Officer involvement and HSCL Coordinators home visits. (Band 1)

Enhanced extracurricular activities, meals, variety of learning experience. (Band 2)

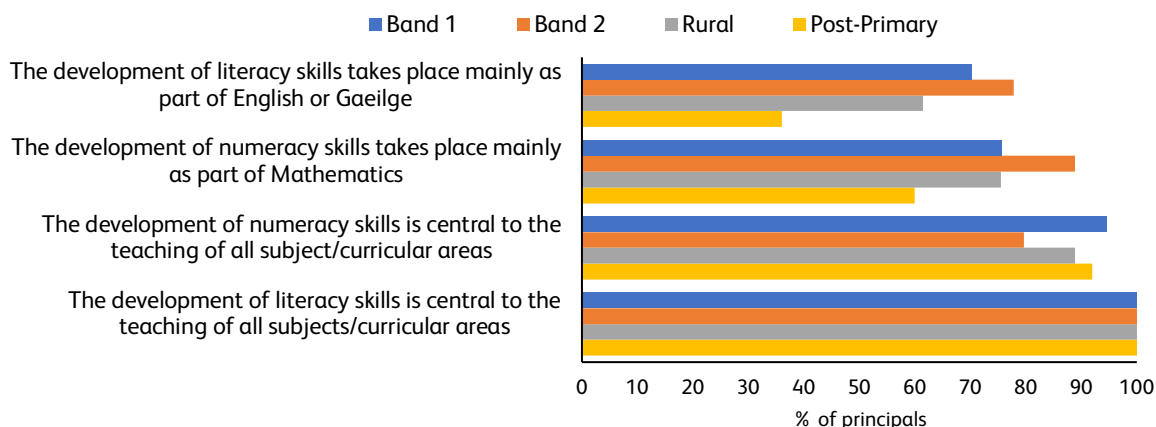
We are proud of our efforts in making sure the transitions for students to new schools including secondary and the local school happen smoothly with good handovers from our teachers. (Band 2)

Focus is on making sure that school is a happy place where children feel safe and experience positive learning experiences throughout the year. (Rural)

Provide reduced Leaving Certificate timetable with Learning Support; do not let students fall through the net; speakers from Traveller community in school 2022/23 to encourage retention; find alternative in other education centre if insisting on leaving school. (Post-primary)

Literacy and numeracy

Principals were asked to rate their agreement with a number of statements on the approaches to the teaching of literacy and numeracy skills in their school. Figure 19 shows the percentages of principals who ‘strongly agreed/agreed’ that the approach is used in their school.

Figure 19: Approaches to the teaching numeracy and literacy (strongly agreed/agreed)

- Principals recognised that numeracy and literacy are important across all subjects of the curriculum. Almost all principals at both levels agreed that the development of numeracy and literacy skills are central to teaching of all subject areas.
- However, the majority of principals at primary level agreed that the development of literacy takes place mainly as part of English or Gaelge; a minority of post-principals agreed with this statement. Most principals at primary level also ‘strongly agreed/agreed’ that the development of numeracy skills takes place as part of mathematics; over half of principals at post-primary level agreed with this statement.

Principals provided examples of how the development of skills in literacy and numeracy were developed in the school and the content was grouped into the following themes:

- Revisions made due to DEIS status/planning.
- Staff dedicated to literacy/numeracy.
- Use of target setting.
- Class planning/curriculum.
- Integration in all classes/whole school approach.
- Numeracy strategies and initiatives.
- Literacy strategies and initiatives.

Illustrative examples of how the schools develop literacy and numeracy are provided in Box 4.

Box 4: Examples of how the schools develop literacy and numeracy

We use the school policies and the DEIS plan to plan for and implement school-wide strategies of teaching and learning in both subject areas. (Band 1)

Team teaching, Reading recovery, Maths recovery, upskilling, guided reading, multiple methodologies and approaches. Sharing of CPD and staff expertise. Focusing on literacy levels for cohorts of children (e.g., children from the Traveller community) this is a major struggle and significant support is required. (Band 1)

While literacy and numeracy skills are developed in English and Maths classes, students also are encouraged to work on oral language skills throughout the day. A print-rich environment is provided for literacy, clocks and thermometers are placed in the yard for students to interact with along with hopscotch and target boards. Hands on math resources were bought for every class. (Band 2)

Through Integration with other subjects such as Drama, Art, P.E etc. (Rural)

We have created both a literacy and numeracy team and they run numerous initiatives throughout the year (e.g., Maths week, Maths for fun, Drop Everything and Read, what are you reading at present). (Post-primary)

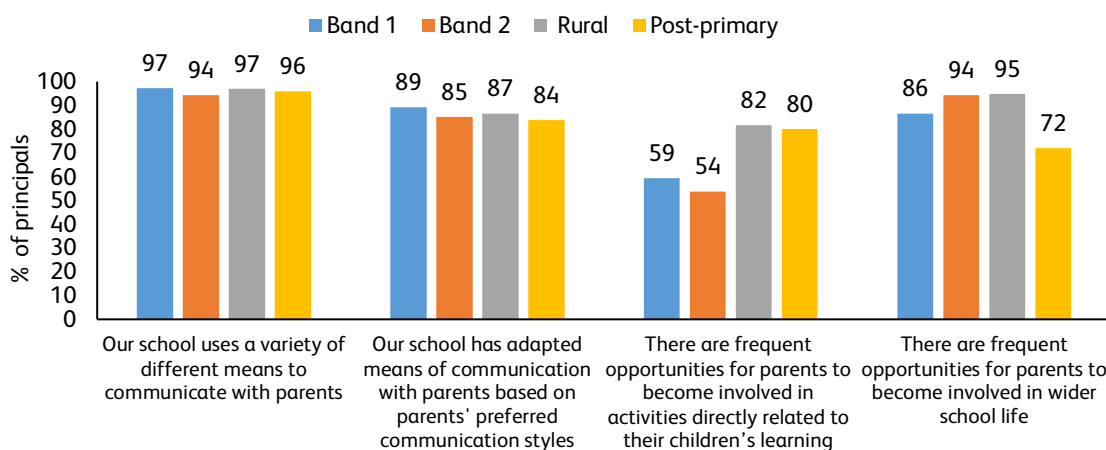
Keywords highlighted in every class; Action Verb posters in every classroom; Numeracy moments highlighted in subjects; Problem of the Week; Drop Everything and Read; Book Week; Maths week

Maths Support Centre; Uniform approach to common numeracy topics across different subjects. (Post-primary)

Involvement of parents

Principals indicated their agreement with statements on the methods used by their school to communicate with parents and to involve them in their child’s education. Figure 20 shows the percentages of principals who ‘strongly agreed/agreed’ (agreed) with these statements.

Figure 20: Involving parents in schools



- Most principals agreed that their school used a variety of means to communicate with parents, that they adapted the means of communication to the preferred communication style of parents or that they provided opportunities for parents to become involved in the wider life of the school.
- The percentages of principals who agreed there were opportunities for parents to be involved in activities related to their children’s learning were lower with just over half of principals in

Band 1 and Band 2 schools agreeing with this statement.

Principals provided examples of the challenges with home school communication and the strategies used to overcome these challenges. Responses were grouped into the themes (Box 5).

Some of the challenges in communicating with parents included:

- Technology/connectivity.
- Language barriers.
- Changes to contact details.

Box 5: Principals' reported challenges in home school communication and selected strategies used by schools to address these challenges

Challenges

Parents with literacy difficulties themselves. Parents changing phones frequently and not reinstalling Aladdin. (Band 1)

Some families have not used Aladdin - we sent them home paper notes. Some families don't speak English - we use Google translate to translate. (Band 2)

Poor reception for phone, poor internet coverage, wrong email addresses, language barriers. (Rural)

Strategies

Some families have not used Aladdin - we sent them home paper notes. (Band 1)

Some families don't speak English - we use Google translate. HSCL uses voice notes via WhatsApp to communicate with target families who have difficulty with writing. Direct phone calls to these parents. Visits from HSCL. (Band 2)

Translators arranged for parents. (Post-primary)

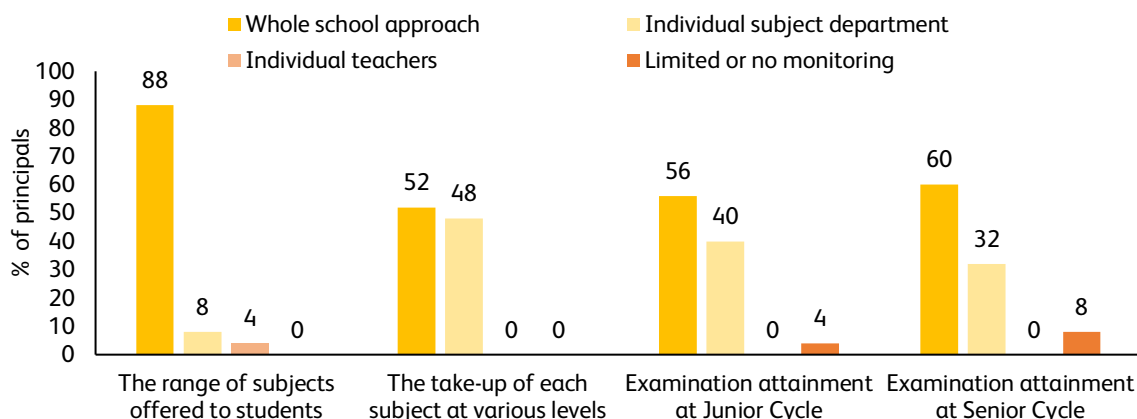
Various strategies were used by school to facilitate communication including:

- Use of technology (e.g., translators, apps).
- HSCL Coordinator (e.g., calls, visits).
- Training for parents.
- Avoiding the use of technology (post/call back/in-person meeting/letter).

Subject choice (Post-primary only)

Post-primary principals reported their approaches to the monitoring of subject choice, take-up and attainment at their school (Figure 21).

Figure 21: Post-primary school approaches to monitoring subject choice, take-up and attainment



- A whole school approach was reported by a large majority of principals to be adopted in relation to the range of subjects offered.
- In contrast, there was greater variation in the monitoring of subject take-up and Junior Cycle attainment, where both whole school approaches and monitoring by individual subject departments were evident.
- A small minority of principals (8%) reported that there was limited or no monitoring of examination attainment.

Principals also provided examples of the changes their school made in terms of monitoring subject choice, take up and attainment. Responses were summarised under a number of themes.

Subject choice:

- Student survey (e.g., gauge interest in subjects to inform planning).
- Trial of subjects (e.g. Transition Year [TY], programmes).
- Widen subject choices (addition of new subjects, e.g., Physical Education).
- Information on subjects for students and parents (e.g., meetings, websites etc.).

Attainment:

- Review school performance.

Some illustrative quotes are shown in Box 6.

Box 6: Examples of the changes their school made in terms of monitoring subject choice, take up and attainment

Students are surveyed each year when moving to Senior Cycle - and the subject bands are created from their requests.

Students are allowed sample subjects for the month of September and make any changes in their choice during this time.

The use of TY modules to promote subjects that may be finding it difficult to hold numbers from JC to LC.

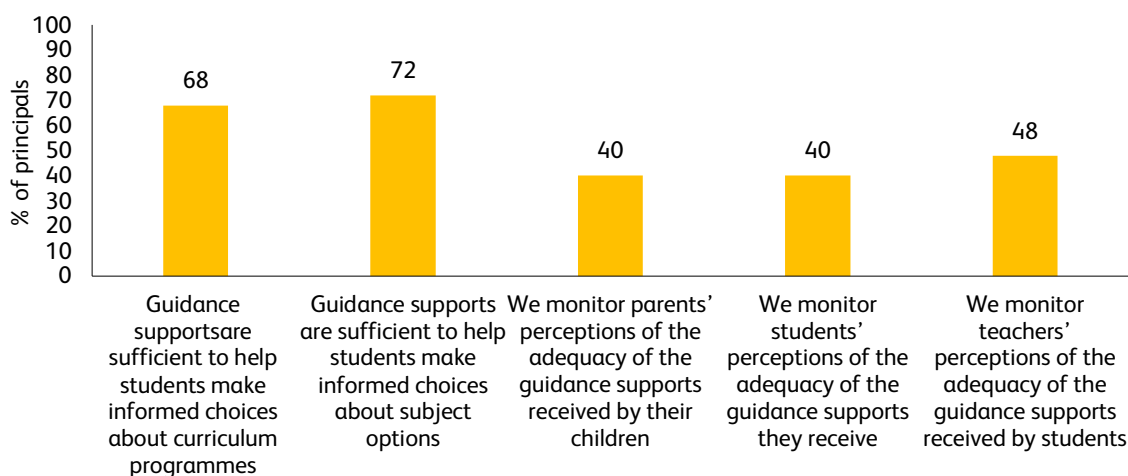
Information evenings on subjects for parents - information afternoon for students.

We take each subject, we look at the number of students who sat higher level, the number of students who sat their exam in Gaeilge, we compare our results to the national average and discuss as a whole staff how we can improve our students' grades.

Provision of guidance supports to students (Post-primary only)

Principals of post-primary schools provided their views on the provision of guidance supports to students in the school year 2022/23. Figure 22 shows the percentages of principals who agreed (strongly agreed/agreed) with the statements on guidance supports.

Figure 22: Guidance support for students: Post-primary (strongly agreed/agreed)



- More than two-thirds of principals 'agreed' that guidance supports for students were sufficient to inform students' choices of curriculum programmes. Nearly three-quarters of principals indicated that guidance supports were sufficient to help students make informed choices about subject options.
- Less than half of the principals indicated that parents', students' or teachers' views on the adequacy of guidance supports were monitored.

- Principals reported difficulties in the recruitment of guidance staff.

Principals provided examples of changes their school made in response to monitoring the adequacy of guidance supports for students (Box 7). Responses were categorised into a number of themes:

- Develop/refine school plan for guidance.
- Staff CPD (e.g., sharing good practice).
- Organise guidance events and activities (e.g., visits to Further and Higher Education institutes).

Box 7: Principals’ comments regarding the provision and monitoring of guidance supports for students

It is impossible to get guidance teachers in the area where we are based.

Recruitment of substitute guidance counsellors has posed a major challenge.

Guidance period introduced in 3rd Year as part of Wellbeing 400 hours to address transition to Senior Cycle, Programme & Subject Choice.

Strong unified guidance department. Facilitating teachers completing Guidance qualification.

Guidance calendar of events, CPD on all aspects of Guidance, Strong connections with outside agencies and colleges, College visits with all or most vulnerable students.

Our guidance team attend regular meetings with other guidance teachers within the county and we facilitate cover for this.

Principals’ views on DEIS

In the last section of the survey, principals were provided with text boxes and asked to comment on what the school’s inclusion in DEIS meant for them as a principal and what it meant for the school more broadly. They were also provided with space to provide any other comments relevant to the survey. Through content analyses, responses were categorised into different themes.

What does inclusion in the DEIS programme mean for you as principal of your school?

A total of 215 primary principals (out of a total of 238; 90 %) and 25 post-primary principals (out of a total of 27; 93 %) provided responses to this question. The most frequently mentioned topics related to benefits of inclusion in DEIS and challenges associated with the additional workload. These are summarised in Table 12.

Table 12: What the DEIS programme means to principals: Main themes and percentages of responses categorised under each theme

Themes	Band 1 %	Band 2 %	Rural %	Primary Total %	Post-primary %
Benefits					
Supports for students: funding, classroom resources and more opportunities	65	57	55	56	56
Staffing/CPD: HSCL, CPD opportunities	35	43	9	21	26
Monitoring and planning	14	10	10	11	19
School meals	5	9	6	6	11
Challenges					
Additional workload	38	24	29	29	52

In terms of benefits, principals highlighted the increased funding allocation, the provision of classroom resources, school meals and the creation of opportunities for students. Additional staffing and CPD opportunities were valued. The benefits of monitoring and planning were also reported. Examples of benefits are provided in Box 8.

Box 8: Examples of the benefits of DEIS for principals

It means more areas of focus as the SSE scheme has now broadened from one area to six. The potential impact of lower-class sizes means more staff and building development. ...The additional funding does allow for better opportunities to engage in schemes that will benefit the students. (Band 1)

The appointment of HSCL has been enormously supportive of Principal's need to develop more robust communication with parents. The PDST support has really guided the whole staff curricular planning. The DEIS plan has focused our developmental work in the six selected areas. (Band 2)

It helped to get our whole school involved in action planning for the future of our school and the education of the children. It has enabled me to attend planning for DEIS planning (SSE) and given me a better insight into the SSE process and DEIS planning. (Rural)

There is a planned structure for the school going forward. (Post-primary)

Principals also shared their insights on the challenges they encountered when entering the DEIS programme with an increased workload. Selected quotes that illustrate principals' views on these challenges are shown in Box 9.

Box 9: Examples of challenges of DEIS for principals

My job has expanded. More staff means more staff management. Day-to-day management has increased and this means more on the ground management and more paperwork. There is now much more planning involved and time management is a challenge - there is never enough time. (Band 1)

There has been a huge increase in time spent on paperwork and the administration of various initiatives which have been taken from other areas. (Band 2)

Our inclusion has increased the workload for me as I am in charge of the DEIS plan and organising School Meals Programme, attendance, EWO meetings and have primary responsibility for the implementation of DEIS in our school. We have huge issues coming through with our junior classes and interacting with Tusla, NCSE and other agencies is taking a lot of time. (Rural)

More administration. Dealing with perceptions of DEIS. Care in avoiding labelling of students, school or families around DEIS. (Post-primary)

What does the inclusion in the DEIS programme mean for your school?

A total of 217 primary principals (out of a total of 238; 91 %) and 24 post-primary principals (out of a total of 27; 88 %) provided responses to this question. A summary of the benefits and challenges related to inclusion in the DEIS programme as outlined by principals are shown in Table 13 with further detail and examples provided in Box 10.

Table 13: What the DEIS programme means for their school: Main themes and percentages of responses categorised under each theme

Themes	Band 1 %	Band 2 %	Rural %	Primary Total %	Post-primary %
Benefits					
General: resources, supports and budget	84	72	72	74	37
Break cycle of poverty: reference to educational disadvantage	14	19	11	13	33
Improvement in outcomes for students: engagement, attainment and wellbeing	5	16	6	8	15
Provides focus and structure on school planning and target setting	8	2	7	6	11
Challenges					
Implementation of DEIS: workload, training needs and staff attitudes	8	5	3	4	19

Box 10: Examples of benefits of DEIS for the school

Inclusion has been a wonderful development. Extra teachers ensure more time and attention for all students. DEIS grants mean being able to purchase needed resources. Hot meals are amazing. The HSCL coordinator enhances our relationship with parents. Access to Math's Recovery, Incredible Years etc. will have great benefits in the long term. (Band 1)

Better outcomes for all students, particularly students at risk of educational disadvantage. (Band 2)

More funding and opportunities for the school, better learning outcomes hopefully. Greater awareness among school community of what we are setting about doing re DEIS. (Rural)

It is very significant and beneficial - access to HSCL, additional allocation, extra resources - financial and CPD, whole school approach to planning, distributed leadership opportunities for staff, DEIS

co-ordinator (Post-primary)

Principals provided examples of some of the challenges related to the implementation of DEIS. Illustrative examples of these are provided in Box 11.

Box 11: Examples of challenges related to the implementation of DEIS within the school

The lack of some supports is still greatly hampering progress, for example not having a full-time HSCL and the lack of SCP. (Band 1)

More stress on class teachers as no reduction in class numbers and yet more planning and initiatives to be fitted in. (Band 2)

It also means a lot more paperwork (effectively it feels like we are doing six School Self Evaluations). This is very time-consuming for a principal, but particularly for Teaching Principals. Trying to teach a class whilst also addressing the ongoing societal challenges in the area can be

very challenging and stressful. (Rural)

Staff are still coming to terms with the targets and measures and it will take time to embed the changes. (Post-primary)

Additional comments

At the end of the survey, principals were invited to provide any additional comments. A total of 115 primary principals (out of a total of 238; 48%) and 11 post-primary principals (out of a total of 27; 40%) provided responses to this question.

Table 14: Additional comments from principals: Main themes and percentages of responses categorised under each theme

Themes	Band 1 %	Band 2 %	Rural %	Primary Total %	Post-primary %
Positives: advantages (resources, supports and budget, benefits)	43	24	15	22	33
Challenges: related to information; support to schools to “start DEIS”	19	29	31	29	33
General comments: DEIS-related matters such as evaluation timing, DEIS band selection and shared experiences	11	5	10	9	0

Selected quotes in Box 12 illustrate the general benefits, including resources, support, budget and likelihood of improved outcomes for students.

Box 12: Additional comments: Examples of advantages associated with inclusion in DEIS

The inclusion of our school in the DEIS programme is hugely positive. We had great assistance with the formulation of our DEIS Plan from our Inspector and from the PDST. We had great staff and parental involvement in the formulation of the plan. I would very much like to see the

School Completion Programme and the Home School Community Liaison Scheme back under the administration of the Department of Education. (Band 1)

It has been a game changer for our school. The staff and ex-principal have informed me about how difficult it was to speak to parents and follow up on things whereas now we have a HSCL who is able to follow through with stuff. The children have availed of lots of initiatives this year and they have benefitted from it. Parents also benefitted although it has been disappointing that only a few of them have availed themselves of the courses initiated by the HSCL. (Band 2)

I feel inclusion in the DEIS programme will shape our school environment to be more focused on the challenges our target students face and we as a school community will be conscious of the problems and become more understanding. (Rural)

DEIS has opened our eyes as a school and has helped to help every single student in our school. (Post-primary)

Besides the many positive impacts of entering DEIS that principals highlighted, they also noted some challenges (Box 13). These challenges ranged from general support for funding, resources, information and guidance to initiate DEIS, to the increased workload and additional responsibilities.

Box 13: Additional comments: Examples of challenges

DEIS and the development of schools and students but my role as a class teacher always takes priority. It is hard to sit alone (when you are exhausted after spending a day in a challenging class) in the principal's office with paperwork piling up in front of you. (Band 1)

In reality, it is a lot of extra work for very little return. Simply lower-class sizes for everyone and that will solve the majority of problems in schools, increase all funding for everyone. It is so simple that you are missing it! Huge amounts of money are being squandered on nonsense. (Band 2)

DEIS rural schools with no access to a HSL support officer, I feel we are disadvantaged within the DEIS process as this would enable us to work on areas more closely with parents on attendance, retention, early school leaving etc. Large class sizes have a big impact on children's ability to access the curriculum. A lot of time outside of school used for management/running of the school and v little time for leadership and development. (Rural)

The process and pre-planning around inclusion in the programme did not help implementation. The DEIS label/perception around DEIS is a real issue - big difference between a school in the DEIS programme Vs. "a DEIS/disadvantaged school". (Post-primary)

Other concluding comments from principals referred to issues such as evaluation timing, DEIS band selection and shared experiences (Box 14).

Box 14: Additional comments: general comments

We are only a DEIS school since September - I hope to be able to do more and help more as I learn and experience more being a DEIS Principal. I would love to see an additional post for Nurture Rooms in DEIS schools. (Band 1)

We are definitely a DEIS school, probably a lot closer to Band 1 than 2. We were DEIS pre-amalgamation, so I know what the benefits are. We've no PE hall which is such a pity esp. for the cohort of children we have. (Band 2)

I do not feel the level of planning required for small schools with small staff numbers and large schools with large numbers of staff should be the same. It leads to an unfair amount of extra work, stress and pressure on staff in small schools but in particular on teaching principals. I personally find it has made a difficult job much harder. (Rural)

Much of the year has felt like putting the cart before the horse in relation to DEIS. We seemed to be expected to swim before we were shown how. More opportunities to network and learn before launching into DEIS would have been very useful and at a whole staff level. (Post-primary).

Conclusions

The survey provided a range of insights into the experiences of principals as they embark on their DEIS journey. It highlights the experiences of principals in initiating and implementing DEIS action planning and some of the successes and challenges experienced by principals.

Findings showed variation across schools in the percentages of students using languages other than English or Irish at home as well as variation in the percentage of the student cohort from Traveller or Roma backgrounds. It was comparatively uncommon for principals to report communicating with parents in languages other than English or Irish and this area may merit further attention, particularly given the widespread availability of technology to support communication in other languages. There may also be scope to increase some aspects of home school communication, such as providing parents with information about academic achievement in the school.

Findings also showed widely held positive views regarding the role of HSCL, with principals citing benefits such as improved home school communication and better engagement of parents. However, a minority of schools had faced challenges during the inception of the HSCL role. These challenges included concerns about the timing of recruitment, the adequacy of shared HSCL posts and the orientation provided to the new Coordinators.

Results showed wide variation in the levels of teaching and leadership experience of principals in DEIS schools. While many principals had extensive teaching experience, there was some variation in their years of experience as principals and their familiarity with DEIS. This may suggest a need for differentiated levels of support for principals based on their prior experience working in the DEIS context.

Principals were asked about their CPD participation in the year before entering DEIS and in the first year in the programme. While changes in participation rates cannot be attributed to DEIS, it is nonetheless informative to have an overview of the most common areas in which CPD was undertaken. Findings show that specific subjects, teaching methods and leadership/management were popular areas for CPD. The most frequently undertaken professional development programme in leadership was Misneach (aimed at newly appointed principals). Across all schools, principals' participation in CPD related to working with parents, teaching English as an additional language or developing a culturally responsive school was low compared to other participation in other areas. As schools are increasingly diverse in terms of their ethnic and linguistic profiles²⁶ (Department of Education, 2023c), the low participation rates in relevant CPD may require attention. (Alternatively, principals may have completed CPD in these areas prior to the period considered in the survey and may therefore have lower levels of need in these areas).

Principals' self-identified 'high' levels of need in various areas of professional development varied across school contexts. Primary school principals reported a high level of need for professional development in the area of whole school support to implement curriculum changes. Post-primary school principals expressed a high level of need in two specific areas: using data for effective planning and school improvement and teaching students with Special Educational Needs. It is important that Oide and other providers of CPD consider areas of priority as perceived by principals.

²⁶ The number of new entrants from outside Ireland, including arrivals from Ukraine, increased by 167.5% in 2022 compared with 2021 data.

In terms of DEIS action planning, most principals reported that schools were at the early stages of DEIS plan development. For the most part, principals reported that a DEIS action planning team was established at their schools, although this was the case for just over half of principals in Rural schools. It should be noted that very few principals indicated that the action plan for their school was published at the time of survey completion. Schools should be encouraged to share their DEIS plan with the wider school community to support parental engagement and community links. Also, findings showed that the involvement of the wider community in DEIS action planning was low. Less than a quarter of all schools had a member of the wider community participating in DEIS planning and this may merit further consideration on how the DEIS planning process may be used to foster school-community links. There may also be value in considering the administrative burden of the DEIS planning process on principals in DEIS Rural schools, given the much greater likelihood of such principals also having teaching responsibilities.

There were both strengths and areas for improvement in the DEIS action planning process. Data gathered from parents did not feature to a large extent in DEIS action planning for these schools. There may be a need to improve strategies for engaging teachers. The DEIS Plan 2017 (Department of Education and Skills, 2017) highlights the importance of providing professional learning opportunities for teachers and school leaders as part of the improvement planning process. However, few principals in any school context reported developing a plan for CPD linked with DEIS and few principals indicated that they reviewed participation rates or the impact of teachers' CPD activities.

The DEIS programme appears to have had an impact on the priorities of school principals in relation to attendance monitoring. This has led to a greater focus on the issue of attendance in the surveyed schools in 2022/2023, in line with the emphasis on attendance within the DEIS Plan 2017.

Whilst most principals agreed that their schools use a variety of means to communicate with parents and that they provide opportunities for parents to become involved in the wider school life, just over half reported that there were opportunities for parents to be involved in activities related to their children's learning. There may be room for improvement in involving parents more closely in educational activities and their children's learning in some schools.

Principals recognised that entering the DEIS programme offers numerous benefits for principals and their schools, such as increased resources; support for students and their families; opportunities to improve outcomes for students and professional development opportunities. Whilst these benefits of inclusion in DEIS were noted, there were also some concerns about the DEIS label and the wider societal perception of being a DEIS school. Further research on what the DEIS label means in the wider context and how this impacts on the schools would be of interest.

Principals recognised that entering the DEIS programme also has challenges related to administration, workload, training and staff adaptation and managing expectations, among others. Supports may be needed to help principals to navigate these challenges although it should be noted the survey was conducted at the early stages of DEIS implementation. It may be that these challenges lessen after the initial onboarding to DEIS, but it would be of interest to continue to monitor this in subsequent years.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Supports provided under the DEIS School Support Programme

Resources for DEIS Band 1 Primary schools

- There are designated staffing schedules for DEIS Band 1 schools giving a class size of 17:1 in junior schools, 19:1 in vertical schools (schools with junior and senior classes) and 21:1 in senior schools [Circular 0006/2023 Appendix A](#)
- Administrative Principal is appointed on an enrolment of 113 pupils [Circular 0006/2023 Appendix B](#)
- [Circular 0034/2023](#) (Delivering Equality of Opportunity In Schools) action planning and grant allocation for all DEIS schools
- Access to [Home School Community Liaison Services \(HSCL\)](#)
- Access to [School Meals Programme](#)
- Access to a range of supports under [School Completion Programme](#)
- Access to literacy/numeracy support such as Reading Recovery, Maths Recovery, First Steps, Ready Set Go Maths
- Access to planning supports
- Access to a range of professional development supports through Oide, the new integrated support service for teachers and school leaders (formerly PDST, CSL, JCT and NIPT). www.oide.ie

In addition, the DEIS Plan (DES, 2017, pp. 56-57) identified:

- Expansion of NEPS provision in DEIS schools.
- Roll out of Incredible Years Teacher Classroom Management Programme and Friends Programme to all DEIS schools.

Resources for DEIS Band 2 Primary schools:

- Administrative Principal is appointed on an enrolment of 136 pupils [Circular 0006/2023 Appendix B](#)
- [Circular 0034/2023](#) (Delivering Equality of Opportunity In Schools) action planning and grant allocation for all DEIS schools
- Access to [Home School Community Liaison Services \(HSCL\)](#)
- Access to [School Meals Programme](#)
- Access to a range of supports under [School Completion Programme](#)
- Access to literacy/numeracy support such as Reading Recovery, Maths Recovery, First Steps, Ready Set Go Maths
- Access to planning supports

- Access to a range of professional development supports through Oide, the new integrated support service for teachers and school leaders (formerly PDST, CSL, JCT and NIPT). www.oide.ie

Resources for DEIS Rural schools

- [Circular 0034/2023](#) (Delivering Equality of Opportunity In Schools) action planning and grant allocation for all DEIS schools
- Access to [School Meals Programme](#)
- Access to planning supports
- Access to a range of professional development supports through Oide, the new integrated support service for teachers and school leaders (formerly PDST, CSL, JCT and NIPT). www.oide.ie

In addition, the DEIS Plan (DES, 2017, pp. 56-57) identified:

- Access to a range of supports under the School Completion Programme.
- Expansion of NEPS provision in DEIS schools.
- Roll out of Incredible Years Teacher Classroom Management Programme and Friends Programme to all DEIS schools.

Supports for DEIS Post Primary schools

- [Circular 0003/2023: Staffing arrangements in Voluntary Secondary Schools for the 2023/24 school year](#)
- [Circular 0002/2023: Staffing arrangements in Voluntary Secondary Schools for the 2023/24 school year](#)
- [Circular 0034/2023 \(Delivering Equality of Opportunity In Schools\) action planning and grant allocation for all DEIS schools](#)
- Access to [Home School Community Liaison Services \(HSCL\)](#)
- Access to [School Meals Programme](#)
- Access to a range of supports under [School Completion Programme](#)
- Access to the Leaving Certificate Applied Programme
- Access to planning supports
- Access to a range of professional development supports through Oide, the new integrated support service for teachers and school leaders (formerly PDST, CSL, JCT and NIPT). www.oide.ie
- Additional funding under the [School Books Grant Scheme](#)

*Accessed 23.10.2023 list provided: <https://www.gov.ie/en/policy-information/4018ea-deis-delivering-equality-of-opportunity-in-schools/#resources-for-deis-schools>

Appendix 2: Use of languages other than English or Irish by students and schools

Appendix Table: Crosstabulation of frequency of provision of home/school communication in languages other than English or Irish by estimated percentages of students with other home languages (Percentages of primary schools in each category)

Estimated percentages of students with language other than English or Irish at home	Frequency of communication in languages other than English or Irish				
	Never	Rarely (~10% of the time)	Occasionally (~30% of the time) or sometimes (~50% of the time)	Frequently (~70% of the time), usually (90% of the time) or always	N/A
	%	%	%	%	%
None	11	0	0	0	3
<5%	20	3	1	3	0
6-10%	6	6	3	2	0
11-25%	4	8	5	3	0
26-40%	2	5	4	1	0
>40%	3	4	1	3	0

Over two-fifths of primary principals indicated that they ‘never’ provided home school communications in languages other than English or Irish (regardless of the percentages speaking other languages). About one-third of primary principals ‘never’ provided communications in other languages and reported either that such communications were not applicable, that they did not have students with other languages or that they had less than 5 % of students with other languages (cells shaded in orange, Appendix Table). About one-quarter of primary principals reported having more than one-quarter of students with home languages other than English or Irish (cells shaded in green). There was variation across this group in the frequency of communicating in languages other than English or Irish. Overall, there was no clear association between the percentages of students reported to have other languages at home and the frequency of communication in languages other than English or Irish.

Similar to their primary counterparts, about half of post-primary principals reported ‘never’ providing home school communications in other languages and there was no evidence that higher percentages of students with other languages was associated with a greater frequency of home- school communication in other languages.

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