**DEIS Plan 2023-2026**

 **Retention Strategy for St Oliver Plunkett N.S. Navan**

**Aims**

* Maintain the participation of parents in the school to ensure there is a close link between home & school.
* Recruit parents of priority families to partake in courses thus ensuring relationships are built up that aid retention of children
* Monitor the attendances of children closely
* Communicate life of the school clearly to parents through school website, Twitter, School Newsletter, Informal meetings and email
* Encourage parents to partake in the life of the school by fostering a culture of inclusion and welcome
* Establish relationship with parents through the HSCL & School Completion
* Clearly communicate the identity and role of our HSCL teacher Mr Anthony McDonagh
* HSCL will liaise with Secondary schools and parents in relation to the transition to secondary school thus helping to retain children in school
* Ensure that the school has procedures in place to ensure smooth transition to secondary and from playschool
* Provide a well-balanced education that develops all aspects of the child
* Ensure that the school has procedures in place to promote participation.
* To promote positive attitudes to learning
* To comply with requirements as laid out by the Educational Welfare Act & NEWB guidelines

**Responsibilities of Stakeholders**

**School**

* Communicate with parents/guardians and keep them up to date on the progress of their children
* Develop strategies for parents to give their opinions /thoughts on school life
* HSCL teacher will liaise with HSCL teachers in other Schools in relation to retention
* Identify opportunities to involve parents in school celebrations like Musicals, Active Schools Weeks, Intercultural days in order to build up relationships and encourage children to come to school
* Maintain contact with secondary schools to help identify trends and put early action in place
* Compile a list of priority children/families in relation to retention
* HSCL teacher visits the home of priority families to maintain contact and relations
* School Completion officer to work with priority families
* To operate Breakfast Club and Homework club for children who are on a priority list for school completion
* Invite children from last years’ 6th class to return in the final term to speak to 6th class children around Transition to Secondary
* Treat all parents/guardians with respect
* Facilitate transitioning from special class to mainstream as much as possible

**Parents/Guardians**

* Inform themselves on the day to day events in the school by reading emails, the school website and school newsletters
* Ensure they have enrolled their children in secondary school and have given themselves the option of more than one
* Attend Parent Teacher meetings in November to ensure they keep up to date on child’s progress
* Attend school events such as on-line zoom training for transition and Junior Infant Induction Day
* Visit the school prior to their child enrolling availing of a tour of the school
* Visit the school website familiarising themselves with school policies
* Attend secondary school open nights
* Encourage the development of a positive attitude towards the school with their children
* Treat school teachers & staff with respect

**Pupils**

* Pupils should communicate any problems or difficulties with class teacher, HSCL teacher, Principal or School Completion Officer
* Pupils should deliver home different communications from the school
* Pupils should attend open nights with parents if possible and identify the aspects of each school that appeal to them
* Pupils should partake in activities throughout the school to develop their talents

**Strengths of the school in relation to Retention**

**HSCL**

* HSCL teacher Anthony McDonagh is in regular contact with the parent body and provides a very effective link between school and home, particularly around transitioning to Secondary School
* The HSCL teacher is a daily presence at our front gate meeting the parents as they arrive to school as well as being a visible figure at all school events. This means that if there are any queries regarding the children’s progress
* The HSCL teacher is very active around the area of enrolment forms for Secondary and ensuring that every child gets a place in Secondary school.
* There are many initiatives within the school which encourage parents to feel part of our school community. HSCL initiatives: Maths for fun, science for fun, sewing for parents, English language classes for parents, Irish language classes or parents, ICT/ iPad classes, literacy/ numeracy classes, cookery, Flower arranging, seasonal activities. The stronger the sense of belonging to the school, the more barriers to school are broken down in the minds of some parents. This is good for retention of students

**School Communication System**

The Aladdin Student Management System makes it easier to communicate with parents through text, email and newsletter. It is a very efficient system that allows direct communication and keeps parents excellently informed of the business of the school. Detailed Newsletters are sent out each month informing parents of the happenings in St Oliver’s. All of this gives the school the ability to build relationships & trust with parents ensuring children are encouraged to be at school.

**EAL Programme**

Dedicated teacher for support of EAL programmes in place in the school which makes settling in easier for children from families that do not have English as a first language. This helps to remove the language barrier for certain families and makes the school more accessible. If this language barrier is somewhat removed it makes settling in a new school setting a lot easier. Similarly our EAL teacher makes it easier for children, who are new to our school with little English, to settle in St Oliver’s.

**Assembly**

Senior Assembly is held every second Friday which rewards positive behaviour including attendance. Golden Trophy is held every other Friday for the children from Junior Infants to 1st Class. This is particularly important in communicating to younger children and their families. Families of classes performing at Assembly receive a text prior to assembly inviting their attendance. Junior Assembly is excellent at helping children to settle in St Oliver’s and communicate the rules in a relaxed atmosphere. Senior Assembly helps greatly to communicate information to the older children around their move to Secondary school. The greater the sense of school community the more at ease families are.

**Extra-Curricular Activities**

Sporting teams and activities are supported in the school with visiting coaches in Football, Athletics, Hurling, Rounders, Basketball, Soccer and Rugby. There is a vibrant sporting community in the school and participation is very much encouraged across the school community. Sport is a great diversion and children are encouraged to train with their friends. Parents regularly attend games and competitions which enriches the experience for the children and helps to enhance that sense of school community. It also develops the opportunity for children to partake in local sporting organisations. Many children will see these extra-curricular activities as a further incentive to be in school

**A Positive School Environment**

St Oliver Plunkett Primary School is a welcoming place and prides itself in caring for children of all backgrounds. Children feel a sense of belonging and are encouraged to attend and participate. The school is very central to the north Navan community. In this regard we make it a high priority to help infants to settle in the school. We also consider it important to facilitate smooth transition to our neighbouring Secondary Schools also. With our positive environment it will encourage integration of children in our Special class into mainstream. Children who are late to school are welcomed with a smile.

**Parent Teacher Meetings**

Parent Teacher Meetings take place in late November. This year we resumed face to face meetings. The Principal is fully supportive of a welcoming and open school ethos. Teachers are available at all times by appointment and on a more informal basis as the need arises. The school promotes an open door welcoming ethos. This means that information is readily available and families stay in touch with the school.

**School Transition Program**

Our School Completion worker conducts a transition program for our 6th class students in Spring-time. This allows them to familiarise themselves with features relating to their new Secondary schools. It also reduces a degree of anxiety related to the move. It provides the children with timetables, Principal names, maps and general information. It ensures that children settle quickly in their new schools and are retained in the system.

**SET Team**

Our SET team in St Oliver’s work hard to ensure that all necessary information is kept up to date relating to children that they work with. Reports & Assessments are passed on to parents to take to their child’s new secondary school. SET team try to help children who are having difficulties and may otherwise develop a negative attitude to school.

**Blazing Saddles Programme**

This is a program offered in the school through Navan School Completion that provides a bike to children in 6th class along with training to ensure they can more easily commute to school each morning from home. This is one initiative that encourages children to be at school and makes travel to school easier.

**NYPD**

Navan Young People Development project is in place to help with children who may find it difficult to come to school. It seeks to find common ground with these children and encourages them tp take time out from their school day to talk about their interests and life. It is an initiative made available through Springboard.

**Navan School Completion**

 Navan School Completion is an initiative St Oliver’s is part of. It provides a project worker to the school twice a week as well as aiding the school in areas such as Homework Club, Breakfast Club, assessments etc. All of this makes retention easier for the school.

**School Lunches**

We have many students who can be hungry coming to school. Initiatives such as lunches, Breakfast club and snacks can help encourage attendance.

**Challenges for the school in relation to Retention**

**COVID 19**

The pandemic has had a big effect on children and has increased anxiety levels around a whole range of topics. This is the case for something like Transition where it can be a difficult milestone for some children. COVID has exacerbated these problems

**Language barrier**

When trying to implement strategies or communicate practice in relation to transition many families might struggle to fully understand due to a language barrier. In some instances English is not spoken at home and it is only the children who can speak English. This can make taking part in school life more challenging for certain families and can certainly make an unknown step to a new school more difficult.

**Lack of Support**

Some children in our school struggle to get the necessary support. This can be a very important factor in Transition. Open nights can be missed, enrolment deadlines can be forgotten and in some cases children may not have applied for a place at all. It is the role of the Principal, Class teacher, HSCL teacher & NSC Worker to constantly communicate messages surrounding transition.

**Financial Burden**

Some families face a major financial burden. The of things such as books, uniforms, school tours and stationary is something which can cause great stress and anxiety in families sometimes leading to an apathy towards education

**Data Findings**

* 98% of respondents felt that St Oliver Plunkett’s was a welcoming school
* 66% of those surveyed said there were aware of a HSCL teacher
* 20% had taken part in Parental courses in the school
* 95.5% reported their child was happy coming to school
* Only 54.5% of parents reported their child participated in extra-curricular activities
* Parent Teacher meetings being held face to face were generally well received
* Communication such as Twitter and School Newsletter were well received
* Days such as Sports Days were seen as an ideal opportunity to get involved
* Respondents said that the HSCL teacher was very welcoming
* Suggested that 6th class children from last year be invited back to speak to transitioning class
* Transition in St Oliver’s was found to be good by most surveyed although many had not yet had a child in 6th
* A visit from Local Secondary Schools would be useful
* Role play scenarios in different Secondary School situations was also suggested

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| **Who are the children in our school at risk of educational disadvantage moving from one school setting to another** |
| **What evidence sources have we to help us identify pupils most at risk** | HSCL TeacherSchool Completion OfficerAttendance RecordsPsychological ReportsClass Teachers |

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| **Why are these children most at risk and how do we ensure we facilitate their progression from one school setting to another?** |
| **What are the factors that make retention more difficult in the school setting for our most at risk students?** | Lack of Parental InvolvementDisadvantaged BackgroundLack of IncentivesLack of Parental Support/Apathy/Negative attitude towards schoolHomeworkFinancial BurdenAnxiety/Emotional DifficultiesLanguage Barrier |
| **How could we make retention in school setting easier for these students?** | Good Communication around deadlinesHSCL Teacher & School Completion Officer help with applicationsExtra –curricular activities like sport/drama/clubs etcAwards at Assembly/DFL StampsBreakfast Club/Homework ClubHelp alleciate Financial burden on at-risk familiesDifferentiation of work for priority childrenPlay TherapyPositive Inclusive environment for children in special class |

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| **Why are these children most at risk and how do we ensure we facilitate their continued** **involvement in school life?** |
| **When we examine our at risk students in relation to retention what areas should we focus on?** | AttendanceReportsPunctualityConsistent Reward SystemWell-beingParental Involvement & relationship buildingBuilding a positive school environment |
| **What other school factors might influence retention such as classroom/school climate, student-teacher relationships, teacher expectations, school organisation, etc** | Clear communication from the schoolTranslated leaflets for non-English speakers around transitionSchool ClimateStudent/teacher relationshipUnrealistic teacher expectationsFinancial burden on at-risk familiesClose communication between class teacher HSCL teacher and School Completion Officer |

**Targets**

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| **What are our specific Retention targets in the next 3 years?****Target 1** |
| **Focus Area**  | **Target 1** |
| The main area we are focusing on is retaining at risk students in a school setting | **June 2023**To retain 100% of students in their school life in St Oliver Plunkett Primary School |
| **June 2024**To retain 100% of students in their school life in St Oliver Plunkett Primary School |
| **June 2025**To retain 100% of students in their school life in St Oliver Plunkett Primary School |
| **What are our specific Retention targets in the next 3 years?****Target 2** |
| **Focus Area**  | **Target 2** |
| Another of area of focus identified by our Retention team was how we might make ensure that children are provided with a positive classroom and school environment | **June 2023**That 80% of priority families would state that they find St Oliver’s a welcoming school |
| **June 2024**That 85% of priority families would state that they find St Oliver’s a welcoming school |
| **June 2025**That 90% of priority families would state that they find St Oliver’s a welcoming school |
| **What are our specific targets regarding the retention in the next 3 years?****Target 3** |
| **Focus Area**  | **Target 3** |
| This target is focused on ensuring that no child falls between the step of moving from Primary to Secondary and thus remaining in the school system | **June 2023**To ensure 100% of pupils complete the Post primary school entrance exams and progress to post-primary |
| **June 2024**To ensure 100% of pupils complete the Post primary school entrance exams and progress to post-primary |
| **June 2025**To ensure 100% of pupils complete the Post primary school entrance exams and progress to post-primary |

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| **What needs to be put in place to achieve those targets and by whom?** |
| **Initiative** | **Led by** |
| Clear communication from the school with parents around rules, initiatives, policies etc | PrincipalDeputy PrincipalISLM teamAll teachersHSCL TeacherSchool completion officer |
| HSCL to host regular Coffee mornings that allow the school to build up a relationship with families ensuring children continue to attend. | HSCLSchool Completion Officer |
| A member of the ISLM team who has responsibility for Retention and monitoring the Retention Plan | ISLM Team |
| Maintaining close links between HSCL teacher and NSC officer. A Care team meeting should happen on a monthly basis | PrincipalHSCL TeacherNSC officer |
| Construct a Powerpoint display clearly detailing the role of HSCL to be delivered at first staff meeting of the year, first Parents Association meeting of the year and Junior Infant Induction day | HSCLPrincipal |
| After school classes for priority children to encourage attendance and higher levels of self-esteem | HSCLNSC OfficerPrincipal |
| Transition Programme conducted with 6th class students in the Spring. This ensures a smooth transition into secondary as well as helping retain these children in the system. | School Completion OfficerHSCL TeacherRelevant post-holder |
| A wide range of extra-curricular activities offered to encourage participation, attendance, fun and a sense of belonging. This might include sport, clubs, musicals, dramas, etc | PrincipalClass Teachers |
| School lunches would continue to be accessible for children and that those in need of breakfast club would also be catered for. | HSCLPrincipal |
| To identify and review educational targets for children on the priority DEIS list | Class teachersSETPrincipalHSCL |
| HSCL to build up rapport and work with poor attendees | HSCL |
| Translate Information note regarding transition and communicate more clearly with non-English speaking parents. This can be done for many notes that are being sent out to parents ensuring a clear message is communicated to all students. | School Completion officer |

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| **Where do the following areas play a role in the plan?** |
| **Continued Professional Development**Online courses for teachers and parents regarding the Transition to Secondary schoolOnline Summer courses that develop further knowledge Training for teachers in resilience programmes such as Friends for Life and Zippy’s FriendsGuest facilitators into the school enhancing the schools approach to providing a well-balanced education for students.PDST DEIS training course | **Well-being**Sports activities such as GAA, Soccer, Athletics, Rounders, Rugby & Tennis that bring our students joy and in the case of some keep them coming to schoolExtra-Curricular activities in the school such as Comhairle na n-Óg, Chess Club, Knitting Club, Science Club, & Library Committee that can allow children to build relationships with other children as well as building their self-esteem & confidenceParental Courses facilitated by the HSCL throughout the yearPlay Therapy provided for children by the school which could prove beneficial in instances where there are anxieties. School Trips for educational purposes broadening children’s horizons and giving them goals to work towards.Oliver’s Can Dance, X-Factor, Worl;d Book Day, Grandparents’ Day, School Musical, Christmas Plays, Haloween Parades, Seachtain na Gaeilge Parades, School Choir etcInitiatives such as Active Schools Week, Friendship week etc which allow for the integration of students in the special classesClass and student awards given out at assembly. | **Leadership**Organisation of events such as Active Schools Week & Friendship weekDeveloping on online method to communicate with parents through Twitter, website and newsletter that allows for clear and concise messaging that contribute to retentionPowerpoint display conducted by the HSCL explaining clearly their role and function at Infants Induction DayPost-holder for Retention monitoring the progress of the DEIS plan for RetentionOrganisation of the different one day events that happen in the school each yearThe School Care time involves leadership being shown in caring for our most vulnerable students |