

# School Completion Programme.(SCP)

The School Completion Programme (SCP) is a Department of Education & Science initiative that aims to have a positive impact on levels of pupil retention in primary and second level schools and on the number of pupils who successfully complete the Senior Cycle, or equivalent.

SCP entails targeting individual young people of school-going age, both in and out of school, and arranging supports to address inequalities in education access, participation and outcomes. It is based on the project model with an integrated approach involving primary and post primary schools, parents and relevant statutory, voluntary and community agencies.

Projects are required to engage in a consultative and planning process with schools' staff, with parents and with local representatives of relevant statutory, voluntary and community agencies in the development of the annual retention plans. What makes the School Completion Programme unique is its 'bottom up' approach, which allows the local management committees to put together plans and supports that target the needs of local young people at risk of early school leaving. Each project employs a local Coordinator to run the project at local level.

## **The Service and Management Structure**

In 2006 / 2007, the School Completion Programme was subsumed into the new School Support Programme, under DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools), the action plan for educational inclusion, which is being implemented on a phased basis over five years. There are currently 124 School Completion projects in operation nationwide, encompassing 464 primary schools and 227 post-primary schools.

## **National Coordination Team**

A National Coordination Team that comprises a National Coordinator and four Regional Coordinators supports the School Completion Programme. It is the task of the National Coordination Team to advise on and monitor SCP Projects and their integrated area-based Retention Plans that support the young person at-risk at local level. A Programme Research and Development Officer provides research and administrative support for the development, delivery and evaluation of the School Completion Programme.

In-career development for local coordinators and project workers is provided at regional and national level. Regional in-service is offered in the regions twice a year. National in-service is provided annually. Planning and review meetings are held in each region at the end of the academic year

## **Projects**

Local Management Committees have been set up in each project area and typically comprise principals of participating schools, HSCL Coordinators, Visiting Teacher for Travellers, Local SCP Coordinator, Vocational Education Committee rep when VEC Schools are involved, County/City Development Boards, RAPID/CLÁR, Drugs Task Force, Juvenile Liaison Officer, Health Service Executive, Community and Voluntary sector, NEWB, Youth organisations. This is not a definitive list and is only a guide since the composition of the Local Management Committee varies with each project.

The 124 SCP Projects all employ a full-time Local SCP Coordinator and the majority of these projects also employ SCP Project worker/s on a full-time or part-time basis.

In addition to Local Coordinators and project workers, SCP projects employ other personnel on part-time/sessional and voluntary basis to help with

- Meal provision - breakfast clubs/ lunchtime clubs helping with catering
- Homework clubs - assisting children with their homework ( not necessarily teachers)
- Attendance Trackers - employed on part-time basis to track pupils attendance
- Sports coaches/ leisure activities

## **Supports/ Interventions**

The School Completion Programme identifies young people at risk of early school leaving and aims to provide a range of supports for them in-school, after school and holiday time, through linkages with relevant community, youth and statutory agencies.

SCP projects target and focus programme resources in the first instance on the individual young people who are most at risk of early school leaving. Additionally, some strategies may include a wider group to avoid stigmatisation (e.g. in the case of transfer programmes sporting and leisure activities,) or the entire school population (e.g. where tracking attendance is involved).

## **Integration of Education Services under the Remit of the National Education Welfare Board**

In May 2009 plans were announced to expand the remit of the National Education Welfare Board (NEWB) with effect from the 1st September 2009, to include responsibility for the Home School Community Liaison (HSCL), the School Completion Programme (SCP) and the Visiting Teacher Service for Traveller pupils (VTTS) as well as the National Educational Welfare Service.

The School Support Programme under the DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) Action Plan includes 2 mainstream support services, namely the Home School Community Liaison Service (HSCL) and the School Completion Programme (SCP). Schools are also supported by Educational Welfare Officers of the National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB) and the Visiting Teachers Service for Travellers (VTST). These services are all, to a greater or lesser extent, concerned with attendance, participation, engagement and early school leaving and attainment. All deploy a range of targeting strategies, aimed at identifying children at risk, and all engage with children, parents, schools/teachers/principals and external services at different levels. and this development brings together some 700 service delivery personnel under the direction of the Board.

The four individual services will be brought together under one common management team, providing for a single, more focused, strategic direction at local, regional and national levels reflecting equally the nature and strength of each of the services. The integration of these services brings together some 750 personnel employed throughout the country under the management of the new expanded NEWB strengthening the functions of the individual services while contributing significantly to the capacity of the NEWB to deliver on its statutory remit. The underlying rationale for this new single strategic approach, acknowledging and utilising the combined strengths and capacities of the four services, is to deliver better outcomes for children, families and schools.