An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Inspection of a course
in a Coláiste Gaeilge (Irish College)

REPORT

Coláiste Spleodar
Ros Muc
Contae na Gaillimhe
Reference Code: CGC 203

Date of inspection: 19 July 2017
INTRODUCTION

The Inspectorate of the Department of Education and Skills evaluates the quality of educational provision in a sample of courses provided each year by Irish colleges on behalf of the Department of Culture, Heritage, and the Gaeltacht. The report on this Irish course is based on observation of teaching, learning and cultural activities, interaction with students and discussion with management as well as the review of relevant documentation.

Inspectors describe the quality of three main areas of provision using the Inspectorate’s quality continuum which is shown on the final page of this report. The quality continuum provides examples of the language used by inspectors when evaluating and describing the quality of the college’s provision in each area.

The steering committee of the Irish-language college was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report; a response was not received from the steering committee.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

Key Findings
• The quality of teaching was good to very good in each class but it would be very worthwhile if concrete resources and supporting materials were used in the teaching of Irish.
• The students were encouraged to learn Irish on the course and they made good to very good progress in the acquisition of the language.
• It was evident that a very good relationship had been fostered between the teachers, the cinniri (leaders) and the students.
• A wide variety of language and cultural events were organised for the students under the enthusiastic guidance of the leaders.
• The principal and the management committee provided the students with a high quality course.
• Effective assessment policies were in place in the college; this good work would be enhanced if reports were sent to parents and feedback sought from students and their parents at the end of the course.

Main Recommendations
• Concrete resources and supporting materials should be used in teaching the language.
• Written reports on the students’ progress in the language should be sent home
• Obtaining the views of students and their parents on the quality of the summer courses would be beneficial.

1. QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

• The quality of teaching and learning was good to very good on the day of the evaluation.
• The college plan and the teachers’ handbook were used very effectively to prepare the morning classes. The teachers focused on three elements of the communicative approach in their individual planning.
• Proverbs, verses or songs were taught at the beginning of each class. Differentiated language inputs were given on the theme being addressed, which were appropriate to the learning needs of the students. However, using concrete resources and supporting materials at this point would have been of benefit in helping the students understand and consolidate the target language. The development of displays based on the
language themes during the course would contribute significantly to the atmosphere of the college.

• During the lessons, communication and debate between the students was facilitated skilfully in a manner that was relevant to them. The vocabulary and language structures learned were effectively reinforced at the end of the lessons.

• A good atmosphere for learning was fostered in all classes and it was evident that there was an excellent relationship between the teachers, the cinniri (leaders) and the students. The students were enthusiastic about the language and active in their learning. It was evident that their oral proficiency had greatly improved towards the end of the course. A significant minority of students had a high level of language proficiency for their age.

2. QUALITY OF STUDENTS’ EXPERIENCE OF THE IRISH LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

• The quality of students’ experience of the Irish language and culture was very good.

• The teachers and cinniri (leaders) had a high to very high level of fluency and linguistic richness. They worked willingly and diligently to organise a wide range of afternoon and evening activities for the students. The students in the focus group spoke enthusiastically about the special interest groups that were organised for them each day which included music, art, sport, cookery, games and dancing. The céilithe, bouncing castles and crêpes, the 'Seo Linn!' concert agus various trips to the seaside, to Pearse's Cottage and to a local boxing club that were organised for them, were mentioned as the most enjoyable activities they experienced.

• The principal worked closely with all the cinniri each morning to enable them to motivate the students to engage in conversation during the afternoon and evening activities. During the discussion with the focus group, the cinniri were named as the greatest help to students in learning Irish. The students also highly praised the families with whom they stayed during the course.

3. QUALITY OF LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

• The quality of leadership and management was very commendable.

• A preparatory course was organised for the teachers and leaders at Easter.

• A comprehensive language plan was provided which had a strong emphasis on oral communication agus which developed the students’ receptive and production skills in an integrated manner. This plan was utilised effectively throughout the course. The plan and policies of the college are reviewed annually to ensure that they are up-to-date.

• Guidelines have been developed for the teachers and leaders which give a comprehensive account of their roles and responsibilities in all aspects of college life.

• Templates for individual teacher planning and for self evaluation by the college directors have been agreed.

• An electronic forum was set up for the members of the college so that they could share language resources.

• The course was run effectively under the direction of the principal. The principal held meetings with the teachers and with the leaders on a daily basis. The rolls and accounts of lesson content were accurately kept.

• Effective assessment processes were implemented in the college. The students were interviewed before attending the college for the first time. Their progress was assessed during the course and records kept of their language development during their time in the college. Reports should be sent home and the views of students and their parents sought on the quality of the summer courses in order to build on the good work being carried out during the courses.
• Irish language clubs are organised throughout the country when the summer courses end, which provide a continuous Gaelic cultural forum for the students.

• The Irish course authorities confirmed that the college’s steering committee has formally adopted a child protection policy, as required by the provisions of *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children* (Department of Children and Youth Affairs 2011), and that the practice of the Irish course is in line with the requirements of *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children* (Department of Children and Youth Affairs 2011).

• It was confirmed that a copy of the health and safety statement, the code of behaviour and the anti-bullying policy were available. A health and safety officer was recorded in the college’s plan for the Irish course.

**IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PREVIOUS EVALUATIONS**

• The last evaluation of Coláiste Spleodar, Rosmuc was carried out in 2014. The college committee has made commendable progress in relation to the recommendations made in that evaluation.
Inspectors describe the quality of provision in the school using the Inspectorate’s quality continuum which is shown below. The quality continuum provides examples of the language used by inspectors when evaluating and describing the quality of the Irish college’s provision in each area.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Example of descriptive terms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Very Good</strong></td>
<td><em>Very good</em> applies where the quality of the areas evaluated is of a very high standard. The very few areas for improvement that exist do not significantly impact on the overall quality of provision. For some colleges in this category the quality of what is evaluated is <em>outstanding</em> and provides an example for other colleges of exceptionally high standards of provision.</td>
<td>Very good; of a very high quality; very effective practice; highly commendable; very successful; few areas for improvement; notable; of a very high standard. Excellent; outstanding; exceptionally high standard, with very significant strengths; exemplary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Good</strong></td>
<td><em>Good</em> applies where the strengths in the areas evaluated clearly outweigh the areas in need of improvement. The areas requiring improvement impact on the quality of students’ learning. The college needs to build on its strengths and take action to address the areas identified as requiring improvement in order to achieve a very good standard.</td>
<td>Good; good quality; valuable; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; some areas for improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Satisfactory</strong></td>
<td><em>Satisfactory</em> applies where the quality of provision is adequate. Overall, learners have access to a basic level of provision. The strengths in what is being evaluated just outweigh the shortcomings. While the shortcomings do not have a significant negative impact they constrain the quality of the learning experiences and should be addressed in order to achieve a better standard.</td>
<td>Satisfactory; adequate; appropriate provision although some possibilities for improvement exist; acceptable level of quality; improvement needed in some areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fair</strong></td>
<td><em>Fair</em> applies where, although there are some strengths in the areas evaluated, deficiencies or shortcomings that outweigh those strengths also exist. The college will have to address certain deficiencies without delay in order to ensure that provision is satisfactory or better.</td>
<td>Fair; evident weaknesses that are impacting on pupils’ learning; less than satisfactory; experiencing difficulty; must improve in specified areas; action required to improve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Weak</strong></td>
<td><em>Weak</em> applies where there are serious deficiencies in the areas evaluated. Immediate and coordinated whole-college action is required to address the areas of concern. In some cases, the intervention of other agencies may be required to support improvements.</td>
<td>Weak; unsatisfactory; insufficient; ineffective; poor; requiring significant change, development or improvement; experiencing significant difficulties;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>