

**The Department of Education and Skills**

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

**REPORT**

**Coláiste Ó Direáin**

**Farnacurka, Inishmore, County Galway**

**Reference Code: CGC281**

**Date of inspection: 11<sup>th</sup> July 2017**



**AN ROINN OIDEACHAIS AGUS SCILEANNA | DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SKILLS**

**INSPECTORATE**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Inspectorate of the Department of Education and Skills evaluates the quality of educational provision in a certain number 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**

- Management of the course was of a high standard overall and a comprehensive plan was made available to teaching staff; lesson planning was not available in one setting.
- Although the quality of teaching and learning was good overall, with very effective practice evident in some of the lessons observed, more emphasis should be placed during the teaching on the students' ability to compose questions.
- Teachers ensured that students received plenty of opportunities during lessons to work interactively in pairs and in groups.
- The afternoon and evening activities organised were of a very high quality.
- It was clear that students were very satisfied with the course, and demonstrated confidence in their learning; there was a lack of clarity in relation to the procedures regarding the provision of individual reports to each student at the end of the course.
- Overall, good progress was made with regard to recommendations made in the last report.

### **Main recommendations**

- School management should ensure that a lesson plan is provided for every lesson which clearly identifies the lesson's target language and student learning outcomes.
- It is recommended that individual reports, based on a range of assessment strategies, are provided to each student at the end of the course.
- More emphasis should be placed during the teaching on improving students' ability to ask questions confidently.

## **1. QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- The quality of teaching and learning was good overall, with very effective practice evident in some of the lessons observed. It was clear that there was a good relationship between students and teachers, with students well-managed in both learning settings.
- Most teaching observed was well-paced and well-structured. Teachers generally made good use of labels, charts and projectors to support learning. Classrooms were organised in such a way as to easily facilitate the students interacting in pairs and groups, and commendably these interactions provided plenty of opportunities for them to practise the language.
- Students' notebooks were used in an appropriate manner, to support language practice and to record new vocabulary. During the lessons there was a balance between written work and oral work.
- In the best practice observed there was a tight link between lesson planning, teaching, and assessment. Management provided a useful planning template to teachers to support lesson planning. In one location, lesson plans were not available. It is important to ensure that lesson plans are provided for each lesson, which clearly identify target language and student learning outcomes. In addition, teachers are advised to record any incidental language taught during the lessons which may not have been documented in the lesson plan beforehand.
- It is commendable that students self-evaluate their learning progress at the beginning and end of the course. It is recommended that each student is provided with an individual report on their progress, which draws on a wider variety of assessment strategies, including a regular reflection on lesson planning and content.
- Teachers should spend more teaching time developing students' ability to ask a range of different questions with confidence. The students should be given plenty of opportunities to practise this language skill during classes.

## **2. QUALITY OF STUDENTS' EXPERIENCE OF THE IRISH LANGUAGE AND CULTURE**

- Very good quality activities were organised to develop the students' experience of Irish language and culture. It was noted on the way to, and during activities, that Irish was the language of communication among the students. It was clear that they enjoyed and fully participated in the activities that were organised for them.
- Two assistants with excellent Irish were employed. Along with the teachers, they used every opportunity to teach Irish in an enjoyable way to students. Furthermore, it was clear that the staff were creating links between the afternoon activities and some of the language taught during the morning lessons.
- Students enthusiastically took part in evening activities, singing many Irish songs and greatly enjoying the Irish dances they had been learning since the beginning of the course.
- During a meeting with a focus group of students, it was clear that they were very positive about the course with regard to their learning. They demonstrated a deep understanding of the advantages of immersion as a means of language learning.
- Students were given many opportunities to learn about the island's culture.

### 3. QUALITY OF LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

- Overall, the course was managed to a very high standard. Staff ensured that students were safe and that they were provided with attractive and pleasant learning spaces. Plenty of resources were provided and good use was made of them during activities.
  - An effective and comprehensive plan was provided to teachers and assistants. The plan gave plenty of advice and practical directions to staff, including guidance on lesson planning. Management is advised to ensure that the planning template, designed by the College, is used regularly to ensure that a high-quality plan is prepared by every teacher for every language lesson.
  - Management is advised to strengthen assessment procedures. Although teachers used a range of assessment strategies, there should be greater clarity regarding the procedures around the provision of individual reports to each student at the end of the course.
  - 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.
  - Good progress was made in implementing the recommendations made in the previous report. It was reported that many students register for the other courses available, but College management find it more difficult to attract the same number of students to register for this particular course.
-

## THE INSPECTORATE'S QUALITY CONTINUUM

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.

Level	Description	Example of descriptive terms
<b>Very Good</b>	<b>Very good</b> 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 <b>outstanding</b> and provides an example for other colleges of exceptionally high standards of provision.	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
<b>Good</b>	<b>Good</b> 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 <i>very good</i> standard.	Good; good quality; valuable; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; some areas for improvement
<b>Satisfactory</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b> 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.	Satisfactory; adequate; appropriate provision although some possibilities for improvement exist; acceptable level of quality; improvement needed in some areas
<b>Fair</b>	<b>Fair</b> 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.	Fair; evident weaknesses that are impacting on pupils' learning; less than satisfactory; experiencing difficulty; must improve in specified areas; action required to improve
<b>Weak</b>	<b>Weak</b> 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.	Weak; unsatisfactory; insufficient; ineffective; poor; requiring significant change, development or improvement; experiencing significant difficulties;

