

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

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

REPORT

**Coláiste na bhFiann
Ionad Naomh Pádraig
Dore
Letterkenny
County Donegal
Reference Code: CGU093**

Date of Inspection: 13 July 2017



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

- The quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed was good; pupils were given opportunities to communicate but the vocabulary provided was not sufficiently extensive to support students in various ways during the communicative periods of the lessons.
- The students enjoyed the course very much, particularly the afternoon activities.
- The quality of assessment was effective; students were regularly interviewed and parents were made aware of the learning outcomes at the end of the course.
- The quality of students' experiences of Irish language and culture was very good; a broad range of stimulating communicative and cultural activities was provided for them.
- The quality of leadership and self-evaluation was very effective and the management of students was of very high quality.

Main recommendations

- It is recommended that a wider vocabulary be provided in each lesson to cater for the full range of learners' abilities in the language and to provide helpful support for them during the communicative activities.

QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed was effective. The teachers, because they were regularly moving from class to class during the morning, worked cooperatively in planning to foster continuity in lessons. They made effective use of structured questioning, useful visual materials and active methodologies such as dialogue in pairs, group work and language games to support the teaching and learning. The language input while teaching was appropriately challenging for most students but it would be worth teaching a wider vocabulary in each lesson to cater for the range of abilities of all learners.
- The students practised the language by participating in the organised communicative activities but there were opportunities to provide more extensive vocabulary to develop communication for students with different ability levels in the language. The teachers created a very encouraging teaching and learning environment. The students benefitted from learning with different teachers who moved regularly from one class to another during the morning.

- Teachers shared their learning expectations with students at the beginning of the lessons and they assessed the learning at the end of each lesson to reinforce learning. The students participated productively in worthwhile learning activities and they displayed good progress in terms of the knowledge, skills and understanding that were outlined in the teacher's planning.
- All students displayed an interest in what they were learning. It was reported at the focus group meeting with students that they felt they had made good progress; that they had sufficient communicative opportunities and that good variation was provided during the course.

QUALITY OF STUDENTS' EXPERIENCE OF THE IRISH LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

- The quality of students' experience of Irish language and culture was very good.
- An extensive range of worthwhile activities was organised for the students in the afternoon and at night. The cinnirí (prefects) provided great support for the students during those afternoon activities that were observed. The teachers provided classes in art, musical instruments, song and sport for the students and the appropriate vocabulary was being developed effectively during these lessons. The cinnirí provided effective support for students by working with small groups and talking to them to extend the communicative period. It would be useful to have the key words of the particular topic on display in the classrooms for the afternoon activities, to support students in using the new words and phrases with ease.

QUALITY OF LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

- The quality of leadership and management in the college was very effective. It was clear that all staff members had a key role in managing and directing all activities. They were encouraging and energetic while engaged in all these activities. They created a very lively atmosphere to promote creativity in learning.
- The quality of planning for the course was very good. The college plan was very comprehensive and the teachers' planning was well organised overall. Training days were organised for the staff before the course and the teachers had meetings on a daily basis during the course to evaluate the day's work and to have professional dialogue on progressing self-evaluation of their own practice. The teachers kept a daily record of pupils' progress.
- There was an effective assessment system for oral language. Every student was interviewed at the beginning of the course and a further interview occurred during the course to assess progress. Parents or guardians also had an opportunity to talk to the teachers 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.
- There has been very good progress in implementing the recommendation made in a previous evaluation. Interviews with student focus groups occur regularly to build on the self-assessment strategies that the staff is undertaking.

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
Very Good	Very good 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 outstanding 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
Good	Good 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
Satisfactory	Satisfactory 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
Fair	Fair 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
Weak	Weak 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;