

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

**Inspection of a course
in a Coláiste Gaeilge**

REPORT

**Coláiste Uí Chadhain
Baile na hAbhann Theas, Na Minna
County Galway
Reference Code: CGC011**

Date of inspection: 12 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

- The quality of management and leadership of the course was very good. It was clear that an enthusiastic, united team were working for the benefit of the students, between the management team, teachers and student leaders.
- It was clear that the students enjoyed and benefited from the course, particularly the afternoon and evening events, and that the Irish language rule was being implemented effectively.
- The quality of teaching and learning ranged from very good to satisfactory, with scope for improvement in relation to the development of communication skills.
- There was a strong student leadership system in place and many students hoped to be student leaders in the future.
- There was scope for improvement in relation to the quality of planning for teaching in general.
- Considerable effort was put into planning an attractive and interesting programme of events for students.

Main recommendations

- Further emphasis must be placed on the development of communication skills during formal lessons.
- The teachers should plan their lessons in the context of the college's overall teaching plan.
- Significant progress was made on the implementation of two of the recommendations made in last year's inspection. It is still necessary, however, to focus on providing success criteria and language exemplars to students during lessons.

1. QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching and learning ranged from very good in one lesson to satisfactory in the other lessons observed. There was scope for improvement in relation to the development of students' communication skills. Appropriate emphasis should be placed on a range of strategies during lessons that would give every student an opportunity to practise the language.
- Too much emphasis was placed on written material instead of encouraging communication in Irish. It is recommended that pre-prepared material is provided to the students if necessary and that time is spent discussing and working on the topic at hand.
- An effective grammar class that built on the students' communication skills was observed. Emphasis was placed on the local dialect and students were given an opportunity to work in small groups. It is recommended that this approach is extended to other lessons.
- The majority of students in the classes were proficient in Irish and sometimes the work was not challenging enough for them. It is recommended that the lessons are more focussed on the students' abilities and are more challenging. It would be worthwhile further developing students' experience and understanding of Irish structures and grammar by using a range of teaching resources, including grammar books.
- It was reported at the meeting with a focus group of students that they greatly enjoyed and benefited from the course.

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

- Great emphasis was placed on the Irish language rule during the course and it was clear that the students greatly respected this approach.
- Useful efforts were made during the course to develop and expand the students' experience and appreciation of the Connemara area. Students are occasionally taken on trips, including a trip out to Inishmore. It would be worthwhile making wider use of authentic texts from the area, with the help of TG4 and Raidió na Gaeltachta.
- A great degree of effort was put into providing a wide range of afternoon and evening events for students in which they were given an opportunity to practise their Irish in a natural setting.

3. QUALITY OF LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

- The quality of leadership and management was very effective.
- The vast majority of students had previously attended the course, showing their respect for the course as well as the benefit they get from it.
- The strong student leadership system in place on the course was well-organised and appropriately-supervised. It greatly contributed to the effectiveness of the work.
- Beneficial support was organised for students who had particular difficulties learning Irish by providing them with further differentiated support in smaller groups.
- There was scope for improvement in relation to the quality of planning for teaching in general. Teachers must carry out comprehensive and unified planning for the morning lessons in the context of the course's teaching plan.
- 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.
 - Significant progress was made on the implementation of two recommendations made in last year's inspection. These related to presenting the names of the liaison officer and the assistant liaison officer and the availability of the college's policies. There is still scope for development in relation to providing students with language exemplars in order to help them construct accurate sentences.
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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;