

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

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

REPORT

**Coláiste Sheosaimh
Scoil Phobail Mhic Dara
Carna, Co. Galway
Reference Code: CGC101**

Date of inspection: 20 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 teaching and learning were of a very high standard.
- Students greatly enjoyed the course and they were enthusiastic and productively participant in all activities observed.
- A variety of activities that supported the students in using Irish as a living language was provided; the clear implementation of the communicative approach would benefit them greatly.
- The quality of students' experience of the Irish language and culture was very good.
- Safety was prioritised at all times; the student leaders worked very enthusiastically and effective leadership was provided at play-times and during the afternoon events.
- The planning at college level for the course was good; it is necessary to further demonstrate in the plan the teaching methods, learning activities, monitoring strategies and resources required in order to develop the students' linguistic skills.

Main recommendations

- The college plan should be reviewed and updated, in consultation with the teachers, in order to ensure worthwhile language acquisition.
- The communicative approach must be clearly implemented during the language periods in order to emphasise and improve the students' speaking ability and give them a greater opportunity to use the spoken language.

1. QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Teaching and learning were of a very high standard on this course. Students participated productively in worthwhile learning activities and they fulfilled the learning outcomes intended for the lessons observed. A good relationship between teachers and students was noted, as well as a positive atmosphere in classes.
- The lessons observed were managed confidently and the teaching was incremental and included defined objectives. The teaching programme involved continuity and progression. The pace and structure of lessons were effective. The quality of preparation for teaching was good. It is now recommended that time be spent at the end of the lesson in each class on revisiting the errors made or delivering a mini-lesson in accordance with the students' needs.

- Teachers skilfully demonstrated linguistic ability, pedagogical knowledge and subject knowledge. Their enthusiasm in motivating the students to use the language was commended. Good use was made of questioning and group-work. To build on this good work, it is recommended that further use be made of teaching and learning strategies, as well as active learning methodologies, to give students experience in speaking the language.
- Information and communications technology (ICT) was available in classrooms and the teachers are advised to use this resource more often.
- It was reported in the student focus-group that they were extremely satisfied with the morning classes, with the positive atmosphere and with the opportunity to try different activities. The students themselves believed that their linguistic ability was improving.
- The students were interviewed before arriving at the course in order to assess their aptitude in the language. An oral examination was carried out with the higher class at the end of the course. A general assessment was carried out on student progress. It is now recommended that an assessment framework encompassing quality criteria be developed so that a daily record may be maintained. It would benefit the students if quality criteria were used to assess their progress at the end of the course and to share this information with parents or guardians. It would be worthwhile formally implementing a staff review system and organising continuous assessment, based on direct observation and teacher questioning, in all classes.

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

- The students' experience of the Irish language and culture was of very good quality. A positive atmosphere and great spirit was noted during the inspection. A wide range of afternoon and evening events was delivered. These events were well-organised and met the students' interests.
- The students took active part in the different events and greatly enjoyed them. Although posters and labels containing the necessary language were displayed in the hall, it would benefit the students if they had already learned discrete words or phrases in order to enhance their communication. This practice would greatly facilitate the implementation of language immersion.
- The afternoon events were flexible and the senior leaders contributed greatly to student participation. Céilí and music sessions were organised every day. Various trips were organised in order to share the local culture with students. Irish was promoted very effectively through these events.

3. QUALITY OF LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

- The quality of leadership and management was very good. An orderly, safe and healthy setting and learning environment were established for the course. There was an effective student leadership programme in place and the senior leaders worked diligently to foster an energetic spirit among the students. Daily meetings were organised between the principal and teachers and the principal and student leaders. It was reported that an in-service meeting and day was organised for teachers.
- It was reported that committee meetings were organised regularly in order to manage college business. It is recommended that the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht be informed of any and all staff changes or alterations as early as possible.
- Various lessons were conducted proficiently. Students made good use of the student handbook. The teachers made good use of the college handbook and staff had a good understanding of the course aims. Certain teachers had developed their own very rich plans which they used during the course. The committee should develop the college handbook to ensure that it is attending to student needs on a differentiated basis.

Teaching methods, learning activities, assessment strategies and teaching and learning resources should be recorded in the handbook.

- It would be worthwhile seeking the students' opinions on course quality and analysing the merit of the course in general in order to facilitate course planning in future. It would also be worthwhile writing a brief annual report and maintaining it from year to year.
 - The Irish course authorities confirmed that the college's steering committee has formally adopted the policy regarding child protection, 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.
 - The college has made good progress on the implementation of recommendations made in the last report. It would be worthwhile reviewing the teaching guidebook in order to ensure that the course is focused on the development of the spoken language.
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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;