

Department of Education and Skills

**Inspection of a Course
in a Coláiste Gaeilge**

REPORT

**Coláiste Chiaráin
An Cromptán, An Cheathrú Rua, Co na Gaillimhe
Reference Code: CGC171**

Date of Inspection: 23 June 2017



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

Main Findings

- The quality of leadership and management on the course was good; the teachers had an excellent level of Irish and the appropriate policies were available and in place.
- Good attention was paid to the students and worthwhile efforts were made to provide them with a beneficial enjoyable experience regarding the learning of Irish.
- The time and effort expended on providing a wide range of water sports and other activities in order to provide students with opportunities to communicate informally in the target language, are commended.
- Course management and staff were committed to the promotion of the language among the students.
- Some elements of good practice were noted during lessons. The quality of teaching and learning ranged between appropriate provision and needing improvement in specified areas. There was scope for improvement in elements of teaching overall.
- It was not apparent that a comprehensive language plan had been set out for the morning classes.

Main recommendations

- Management should provide guidance and advice to the teaching staff about effective teaching methods and communicative approaches.
- Opportunities for effective use of the target language should be facilitated so that students can practice what they learn in a functional way orally and not just through writing.
- It is recommended that an effective language plan be provided to support language acquisition among the students.

1. QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Some elements of good practice were noted during lessons. The quality of teaching and learning ranged between appropriate provision and needing improvement in specified areas. There was scope for improvement in elements of teaching overall.
- The high standard of Irish among teachers and the *cinnirí* alike was noted. Efforts should be made to extend this linguistic ability and richness of language to the students by drawing their attention to elements of dialect and proper pronunciation of word and phrases.
- It was good practice that learning objectives were given at the beginning of some of the lessons as it gave the students ownership and understand of their own learning. This good practice should be extended. There was limited evidence of revision during or at the end of lessons to evaluate learning and progress.
- Opportunities for communication in the target language were provided to the students in some lessons. In order to ensure the effectiveness of conversation language exemplars should be provided before setting tasks in class in order to help the students to create correct sentences from the outset. A conversational aspect should be part of all lessons even when it is a grammar lesson.
- A lot of time was spent writing in some lessons. While writing is one of the main skills in language learning it is recommended that priority be given to the development of spoken communication skills.
- Valuable opportunities to teach grammar in context were sometimes lost and these opportunities should be used more effectively.
- In the context of mixed-ability classes not enough support was given to students who had difficulties. It is recommended that a unified planned approach be implemented to differentiate in the work in order to cater for all learning needs.

2. THE QUALITY OF STUDENT EXPERIENCE OF IRISH LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

- Worthwhile efforts have been made to provide the students with a beneficial enjoyable experience regarding the learning of Irish. Efforts were made to encourage them to speak the language in class and among themselves.
- Course management and staff were committed to the promotion of the language among the students but it was not evident that Irish was being spoken among them in their own time.
- While it is recognized that ensuring students use Irish at all times is a challenge, it is recommended that *cinnirí tí* and *cúntóirí* be given a more central role with regard to giving guidance and encouragement regarding the students' language use.
- The time and effort expended on providing a wide range of water sports and other activities in order to provide students with opportunities to communicate informally in the target language, are commended.

3. QUALITY OF LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

- The quality of leadership and management on the course was good; the teachers had an excellent level of Irish and the appropriate policies were available and in place.
- It was however not apparent that a comprehensive language plan had been set out for the classes. It is recommended that management consider discussing this in the context of mixed-ability classes and effective language acquisition among students.
- The *cinnirí* played an important and effective part in planning and running afternoon and evening events. It would be worthwhile looking at ways of using their linguistic knowledge to help small groups of students who have difficulties with the language. This is a goal mentioned in the college documentation.

- The Irish course authorities have confirmed that the leadership team of the college has formally adopted the policy concerning child protection as required by the provisions in *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children*(DCYA, 2011), and that the practice of the Irish course is in agreement with the requirements of *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children* (DCYA, 2011)
 - It is confirmed that copies of the health and safety statement, code of behaviour and anti-bullying policy were available. A health and safety officer for the Irish course was appointed in the college plan for the Irish course.
 - The majority of recommendations from other inspection reports dealt with development of conversation skills in general and with providing more support to students with little Irish. There remains a lot of work to be done in these areas.
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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;