

**Department of Education and Skills**

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

**REPORT**

**Coláiste na Rinne  
Ring, Dungarvan  
Co. Waterford  
Reference Code: CGM181**

**Date of Inspection: 13 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 Irish-language college steering committee was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report, and the response of the steering committee will be found in the appendix of this report.

## **SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT**

### **Main Findings**

- The quality of teaching and learning was good in the majority of lessons and considerable strengths were evident in the remaining lessons.
- Part of the class practice was characterised by teaching methods in which the teacher's voice was too dominant and the students' role was secondary.
- The students' experience of Irish language and culture in the course was of very good quality.
- Afternoon events were extremely well organised; Irish was predominant among all groups during the activities.
- Course leadership and management were of high quality.
- The steering committee of the college had attended to previous inspectorate recommendations.

### **Main recommendations**

- In the morning classes, it would be much better to form a real context for conversation in order to draw attention to aspects of grammar rather than have formal grammar as the main part of the lesson.
- The communicative approach, in preference to the traditional teacher-centered approach, should be implemented more with the students in the morning classes.
- Note taking and the written language should be a minor activity in the morning classes and there should be much more focus on practising and developing the students' competence in the spoken language.

## 1. QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching and learning was good in the majority of lessons; considerable strengths were evident in the remaining lessons.
- The main objective of the course was commendable, namely, fostering a love and enjoyment of the Irish language.
- The plan of the teaching course was very good with regard to the guidance provided for morning classes and to prioritising the spoken language and making the material interesting. As a consequence of this, pictures of known TV personalities were used as a stimulus for discussion.
- The teachers' use of Irish was accurate and there was an awareness of the need to foster the students' language awareness .
- In the most successful lessons, an energetic stimulating communicative approach was used and differentiation was evident in the way a range of vocabulary was developed. Examples were given of what constituted a basic speaker, a fluent speaker and a highly proficient speaker. An appropriate extra challenge was given to the most capable students.
- There was a tendency, in some instances, to practise accurate use of the language in contexts that were not realistic and with little regard for an authentic communicative context.
- In certain cases, the layout of the morning classes was too similar to formal classes of a period during which the teacher was too central to the lesson and in which the students had a secondary role as listeners rather than participants. The communicative approach is recommended over a teacher-centered lesson.
- The focus group of students very much commended the experience of speaking Irish regularly in all college activities.
- Information and communication technology resources (ICT) were available; it would be worthwhile to make much more use of them for the benefit of learning.

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

- The quality of student experience of Irish language and culture was very good even though personal contact with the local people was available only to a few students since 95% of students were living in the college. The other 5% were staying in accommodation outside the college.
- Cultural awareness was an integral part of course events and course ethos, in the notices and in the photographs on display and in the central role of the de Hindeberg Library which is a research resource of the college for Irish studies and learning.
- The afternoon activities were extremely well organised. It was noted how well the *cinnirí* were organised in running them and in particular, the extent to which the students were obviously enjoying them.
- The most beneficial aspect of the afternoon activities was how much all the students liked to join in, those who were into sports as well as those who got involved just for fun. Irish was heard to predominate among all groups as the *cinnirí* assisted in encouraging them to play sports and provided them with vocabulary.
- The quality of spoken Irish among the *cinnirí* was impressive and so was the energy that they invested into the activities as well as the encouragement they gave to the students. An excellent atmosphere prevailed and the students spoke Irish with ease.
- A demonstration of hurling skills was one of the afternoon activities that was much in demand. The quality of the demonstration by the instructor and the opportunity to listen to his coaching and directions in Irish contributed greatly to the students' enjoyment and cultural experience.

### 3. QUALITY OF LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

- Leadership and management of the course were of high quality; administration matters were very well structured and organised; the necessary main policies were provided in a timely manner.
  - There was a very good balance between boys and girls on the course, 45% and 55% respectively. This balance contributed greatly to the interaction and dynamic of classes and afternoon activities.
  - The steering committee had a hands-on approach; a senior member was present as a support for the principal throughout.
  - The permanent college staff was a positive feature of the course with regard to promoting the language to the students. The staff is employed due to the various Irish courses being run all year round. The college ancillary staff, the administration and the catering staff members were all very helpful in ensuring the all-Irish atmosphere prevailed.
  - The college authorities had addressed the recommendations in the most recent inspection report with regard to enhancing information and communication technology (ICT) resources in morning classes. Although it was noted that these resources are being used, the use was limited in the classes that were observed.
  - The Irish course authorities have confirmed that the steering committee 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 was 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.
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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
<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;

## **Appendix**

Irish-language College response to the report

**Submitted by the steering committee of the  
College**

**Area 1: Reflection on the content of the report on the Irish college**

The management committee of Coláiste na Rinne welcomes this comprehensive report from the Inspectorate on the work of the Course. It is a fair and accurate account which recognises the many positive features that reflect the work of the courses. Every member of the College staff is highly credited for their efforts at all times in the interests of the children who attend the courses and for their efforts to provide the highest standards in all aspects of the work.

**Area 2: Follow-through actions completed or planned in order to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection, following the completion of inspection activity.**

The report's recommendations will be addressed in the preparatory work that will take place throughout the year as we prepare for next year.

*(The above text is a translation of the Irish-language college response to the report submitted by the steering committee of the Irish-language College).*