

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

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

REPORT

**Lurgan College
Inveran, County Galway
Reference Code: CGC021**

Date of inspection: 6 July 2016



AN ROINN OIDEACHAIS AGUS SCILEANNA | DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SKILLS

THE 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 Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs. This report of the Irish course is based on observation of teaching, learning and cultural activities, interaction with students and discussion with management, and inspection of relevant documentation.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

Key findings

- The standard of teaching and learning techniques was good or reasonably good in the majority of lessons and there was scope for development of methods in a small number of others.
- A very good range of language and cultural activities was provided for students.
- Priority was given to inculcating students' interest in the language.
- A very positive relationship was nurtured between staff and students.
- The pre-prepared material, including technological aids, were of a good standard in the course plan, however the co-ordination of teaching and learning themes need to be improved.

Main recommendations

- A programme of teaching and learning should be developed for the course which would provide a framework for lessons during the morning.
- Teaching and learning would benefit if all teachers were to prepare written plans for morning lessons, based on the whole-college framework suggested above, in which reflection has been carried out on appropriate teaching methods and suitable resources.
- Differentiated and collaborative strategies need to be developed and extended to consolidate learning and to develop communication among the students.
- It would be beneficial to keep policies that have been developed, including the child protection policy, up-to-date on an annual basis and from course to course, and to keep attendance rolls appropriately, as required in accordance with the *Regulations under which recognition is granted to Irish Language Summer Schools (2016)*

1. QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching and learning ranged from good to reasonably good in most lessons, and there was a need for improvement in the techniques employed in the remaining minority.
- Key characteristics of the good practice was the commendable effort made by some of the teachers in short-term planning to create a learning experience which was stimulating and which laid out clear, differentiated learning targets in class work.
- Although teachers were using a computerised language programme for their classes, better planning for teaching and learning was needed to differentiate for the mixed ability setting. A better balance between teacher-centred and student-centred approaches should be employed in all lessons. Opportunities should also be provided in all lessons for students to practice their language production skills.

- The majority of teachers provided a valuable language contribution for the students and during certain classes good emphasis was put on the local dialect. The development of support materials to assist this approach is commendable.
- There was a very positive relationship between the teachers and the students.
- This year the college has developed an innovative system of wristbands to monitor students' progress in the language. Parents are informed electronically about the assessment that is carried out on the development of students' language skills during the course.

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

- A very good range of language and cultural activities was provided for the students.
- The activities were effectively organised and supervised.
- The classes and afternoon activities clearly showed that the college aimed to promote the Irish language and the culture of the Gaeltacht among the students in an enjoyable and active way.
- It was clear during the focus group with students that a positive attitude had been nurtured in the students and that they particularly enjoyed learning Irish through speaking rather than writing.

3. QUALITY OF LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

- The principal managed the college effectively and enthusiastically.
 - A plan for the course containing pre-prepared material and high quality technological aids was available. However, it was not clear that the order in which the themes were been taught or the most suitable methodologies for the delivery of lesson content had been co-ordinated. In addition to this, there was a system in place in which there were approximately twenty teachers changing from class to class throughout the morning. The steering committee should review the co-ordination of the teaching and learning plan. It would be good practice to organise an induction day for staff of each course.
 - The ratio between teachers and students was not entirely clear as teachers who were on the staff register to be in class were on other duties on the day of the inspection.
 - Student rolls were not maintained appropriately and a roll was not in use to record the senior leaders' attendance.
- The Irish course authorities confirmed that the college's steering committee has formally adopted the policy regarding child 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 noticed during the inspection, however, that the college's child protection policy was not up-to-date. Moreover, neither the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) nor the deputy-DLP was named in the child protection policy. The names of the DLP and deputy-DLP on display did not pertain to the July course.
 - It was confirmed that a copy of the health and safety statement, the code of behaviour and the anti-bullying policy were available. It is recommended that a health and safety officer be recorded in the policy.

- Limited progress had been made in implementing the three main recommendations which were made in last year's report regarding individual teacher planning, the quality of teaching, and the use of a differentiated approaches.

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.