

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

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

REPORT

Coláiste Chonnacht

An Spidéal, County Galway

Reference Code: CGC051

Date of inspection: 8 July 2016



**AN ROINN | DEPARTMENT OF
OIDEACHAIS | EDUCATION
AGUS SCILEANNA | 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 and the Gaeltacht. The report on this Irish course is based on observations of teaching, learning and cultural activities, interaction with students and discussion with management, and the inspection of relevant documentation.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

Key findings

- The college management provided a high-quality course for students.
- The quality of teaching is commendable. Teachers collaborated with commitment and enthusiasm to implement the overall college plan.
- Students' language skills in comprehension, oral language, reading and writing were developed in an integrated and progressive manner during the course.
- A happy, enjoyable atmosphere was created for the students in which they were encouraged and fully supported to speak Irish.
- Resources were used in a commendable manner to enable students to speak on language topics during certain lessons. Concrete materials, authentic texts, information and communication technology resources should be organised centrally, according to the language themes set out in the college plan, as preliminary preparation for summer courses.
- While valuable work was promoted by the college in the area of assessment, it would be worth seeking students' views on the quality of the summer courses, as part of the college's self-evaluation.

Main recommendations

- The college committee needs to clarify tour days on the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional & Rural Affairs and the Gaeltacht's information forms.
- Students' views on the quality of the summer courses should be sought.
- Resources should be organised centrally, according to the language themes set out in the college plan, as preliminary preparation for summer courses.

1. QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching and learning was commendable. The teachers cooperated with dedication and enthusiasm in order to implement the overall college plan. A happy, enjoyable atmosphere was created among the students in which they were encouraged and fully supported to speak Irish. A conversational approach was taken in the lessons observed. There were clear periods in the lessons for language input, for communication and for strengthening newly taught language. Students were active learners and were given regular opportunities to practice new language in pairs and in groups. Commendable emphasis was placed on the integrated development of language skills including comprehension, oral language, reading and writing. A stimulating learning environment was created, with

teacher-designed posters and students work on display throughout the college. It was reported during the observation that the teachers were working on a booklet for students to support the language themes in the college plan. This work would be very worthwhile in assisting students to speak at length on language themes and to further differentiate the teaching programme.

- Students achieved good to very good standards of spoken Irish, according to their ability. Resources were used in a commendable manner to enable students to speak during certain lessons. Concrete materials, authentic texts, information and communication technology resources should be organised centrally, according to the language themes set out in the college plan, as preliminary preparation for summer courses.

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

- A wide range of sporting activities was provided in the afternoons, including football, basketball, rounders, Olympic handball and hockey. Céilís, talent shows and competitions were held in the evenings. All events were carefully monitored on the day of the inspection. Regular meetings between leaders, teachers and the principal were held. The leaders had a good understanding of their duties as a result, and encouraged students to speak Irish and take part in activities with understanding and enthusiasm.
- Guest speakers were organized to talk to students about the surrounding area. These talks created a link between history, national culture and the Arts. Trips to the islands were also organised. This was worthwhile to deepen students' understanding of cultural matters.
- During the focus group with the inspector, it was stated that students greatly enjoyed the college's classes and events. According to them, their language ability was improving and their confidence increasing due to the course. Teachers were highly praised by this group. It was reported that students hugely enjoyed the céilís. They were very happy with friendships made during the course and with the high standard of food in their accommodation. The students had very few recommendations for improving the course, apart from the sale of healthy food options as well as treats in the college shop.

3. QUALITY OF LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

- A high standard course was provided to students under the direction of the management committee and principal. It was confirmed that the college's plan for Irish was available. Good emphasis was placed on language acquisition in the plan. A preliminary training course for teachers and leaders is held every year. The teaching plan for this course was reviewed and assessed so that good learning outcomes could be assured for the students. Morning meetings were held with the principal, teachers and leaders. Teaching approaches and college activities were discussed at these daily meetings. This is commended. The college committee needs to clarify four days on the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional & Rural Affairs and the Gaeltacht's information forms.
- Preliminary interviews were held with students to assess their language ability and oral exams were held at the end of the course with external examiners to measure their progress. Reports were sent home with the results. It would be worthwhile seeking the students' opinions on the quality of the summer courses on their completion, as part of the college's self-assessment. The Irish rule was implemented persistently, intelligently, and sympathetically. Students were effectively encouraged to speak Irish by positive reinforcement, individually and per house. The students' behaviour and participation, on the day of the inspection, were highly commendable.

- 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 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.

IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PREVIOUS EVALUATIONS

The work of the college was inspected in 2015. The report of that evaluation was discussed at the preliminary course for teachers before this course commenced. A clear plan was implemented to carry out the recommendations of the report.

- Good progress was made regarding differentiation in the planning. Language goals were set in the college plan for students of weak ability, reasonable ability and high ability. It was reported during this year's inspection that teachers were working on a booklet for students that matches the language themes set out in the College plan. The target language, speech structures and grammar will be clearly laid out under the language themes in this booklet, on a differentiated basis.
- Good use was made of ICT resources on the day of the inspection. The resources were used intelligently to support learning as appropriate.
- The anti-bullying policy was reviewed according the guidelines of the Department of Education and Skills 2011 Guidelines. The reviewed policy was approved and discussed by all staff. An electronic copy was given to all staff members of the college.

The steering committee of the Irish-language college was given an opportunity to comment on the findings and recommendations of the report; the steering committee chose to accept the report without response.