

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

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

REPORT

**Coláiste Cholumba
An Cheathrú Rua, Contae na Gaillimhe
Reference Code: CGC121**

Date of inspection: 14 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 quality of teaching and learning was very good in one class and fair in the other two cases.
- Students were given opportunities to co-operate in their learning in every class but this work was not always effectively organised.
- The leadership and management of the course was effective.
- The course plan was of a good quality.
- Students in the focus group spoke very positively about their language learning experience and about the range of activities available.
- Good progress had been made in implementing some of the recommendations made previously regarding differentiation and self-evaluation but there was still scope for improvement regarding a number of other recommendations, such as planning at teacher level.

Main recommendations

- It is recommended that good practices that support effective learning differentiation, as observed in one case, be used as standard practice across all classes to ensure consistency in the quality of students' experience.
- It is recommended that self-evaluation practices be further developed and consolidated to support the implementation of recommendations made in evaluation reports.
- It is recommended that a health and safety officer be recorded in the course plan.

1. QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Teaching and learning were of a high standard in one class and fair in the other two cases.
- Very good planning and preparation were carried out for one of the classes but there was scope for improvement regarding these elements of practice in the case of the other classes.
- Learning was mainly differentiated and assessed through teacher questioning. Teacher questioning was of good quality only in a minority of cases. To better challenge students of high ability, it is recommended that greater use be made of questions that support the development of higher order thinking skills.
- Students were given opportunities in every class to engage in cooperative learning based on pair work or group work. Different elements of the tasks were of good quality in every case and the development, organisation and implementation of the tasks was of a high quality in one case.
- In order to enhance such tasks, it is recommended focusing during the design stage on learning differentiation, ensuring that each participant has a specific role, that the audience has a task to complete during feedback, and that the task will have a definitive time limit.

- The students' oral competence in Irish is assessed regularly during the course and their achievement is reported to their parents.

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

- There was a very good range and selection of activities available that supported the development of the students' experience of the language and culture.
- Activities were well-organised and effectively supervised.
- There use of Irish among students during activities was good.

3. QUALITY OF LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

- The leadership and management of the course was effective.
- The steering committee employed best practice when it organised an in-service day for the team.
- The course plan was of good quality. The layout supported a thematic approach to lesson planning and to the integration of grammar, language and content.
- Best practice in terms of the framing of specific learning objectives was associated with those objectives that were expressed as learning outcomes. It is recommended that the specification of learning outcomes for the different topics be continued.
- 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).
- A copy of the health and safety statement, the code of behaviour and the anti-bullying policy were available. It is recommend that a health and safety officer be recorded in the course plan.
- Students were well looked after and the course operated in a positive atmosphere.
- Students were very positive about their learning experience and about the range of activities available.
- A good basis has been established for the college's self-evaluation practices through, for example, discussions at steering committee and principal level on recommendations made in evaluation reports and the inclusion of students' voice in the review of the various course activities.
- Good progress had been made in implementing some of the recommendations made previously regarding differentiation and self-evaluation but there is still scope for improvement regarding a number of other recommendations, such as planning at teacher level, in the case of the majority of classes.

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.