

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**

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

**REPORT**

**Coláiste na nOileán  
Tír an Fhia, Leitir Móir  
County Galway  
Reference Code: CGC37122**

**Date of inspection: 13 June 2016**



**AN ROINN OIDEACHAIS  
AGUS SCILEANNA | DEPARTMENT OF  
EDUCATION  
AND SKILLS**

**THE INSPECTION**

## **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. 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 aspects of the course observed were very well organised.
- Management was totally committed to providing the students with an excellent language learning experience, but there is a need to facilitate some of the teachers to use a wider range of teaching methodologies.
- There was variety and creativity in the organisation of the sport and entertainment events and the work of the management is to be commended in this regard.
- Worthwhile investment was made in water sports equipment, an activity which the students thoroughly enjoyed.
- The students were positive about the course though some said that there was not enough learning challenge for the more able language students.
- Appropriate efforts were made during the morning Irish language lessons to ensure there was active learning but there was an over-emphasis on writing skills and the use of the college booklet.

### **Main recommendations**

- It is recommended that training in teaching methodologies is provided for teachers before and during the course to ensure that Irish language lessons are stimulating, interesting and cater for the students' range of abilities.
- It is recommended that more limited use is made of the college booklet and that other resources and facilities are utilised during the Irish language lessons.
- It is recommended that sporting and other relevant terms are taught to the students at the start of the course to prepare them for active participation in sporting and entertainment events.
- More formal assessment should be carried out on the students' ability at the start and end of the course to assess progress and to provide a report for parents.

### **1. QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- The aim of the lesson was given at the start of a number of the lessons observed and this practice is to be commended. This practice would be even more effective if the learning intentions were given to the students in terms of what they would be able to do at the end of the lesson as a result of their learning.
- Appropriate efforts were made during the morning lessons to ensure there was active learning through the use of working in pairs and group work. To enhance the effectiveness of this work, language exemplars should be displayed on the walls or the white board. The students could draw on these as they compose sentences on various subjects.
- Teachers were too dependent on the college booklet as a teaching resource. The booklet was provided to the teachers as a guide rather than a textbook. The contents of the booklet are fairly basic, especially for students who have a good standard of Irish and the students themselves mentioned this in the meeting with the focus group.

- There is considerable emphasis on writing during the Irish language lessons. This should be discussed to ensure that students are provided with sufficient opportunities for communication in the spoken language in order to take an active part in all the course's activities.
- Grammatical errors were corrected and students were asked to give full sentences in certain cases observed. This good practice needs to be extended to all lessons.

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

- The rule in relation to speaking Irish at all times was laid out clearly and college management were totally committed to providing students with an excellent language learning experience. A stronger, more effective input should be sought from the cinnirí to help implement this aim.
- The students themselves mentioned in the meeting with the focus group that lessons were, at times, too easy. All students on the course should be challenged in their learning.

## **3. QUALITY OF LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

- All aspects of the course observed were well organised. It was confirmed that the College's plan for teaching Irish was available.
- There is no proper system in operation to assess the students' progress. Management should ensure that students are examined at the start and end of the course and a comprehensive report provided to parents on their progress.
- It is recommended that teachers are given comprehensive training before and during the course regarding the use of a range of methodologies and strategies. There is a need to ensure that students are enabled to use their spoken language.
- College management 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 course.

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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.

# **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**

We would like to mention that the report refers to one summer course. This course was operating on the same campus as the ordinary three week course with the vast majority of students attending the three week course.

We were very happy with the commendation given to the management of the college during the evaluation visit and again in the report. We were delighted that recognition was given to the extensive investment that we have made in recent years to ensure that a wide range of sporting and cultural activities is made available to our students.

### **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.**

#### **Professional development for staff**

In relation to the recommendation in the report regarding professional development for the teaching staff, we would like to state that the college did provide a training day for the teaching staff. During this training day considerable emphasis was placed on the use of group work and role play to facilitate dialogue during the lessons. It was made clear to staff that the teacher handbook was to be used as a guide only especially for those with a reasonable or high standard of Irish. (There is another handbook available for those at a higher standard of Irish and this is used in the older classes). Each teacher was given direction from management to plan their lessons to ensure the use of a range of teaching methodologies and these lessons were planned accordingly. The teachers were brought together for a meeting and management discussed the teaching methodologies that would ensure active learning with them. The principal and course directors checked with teachers during morning classes to ensure this was happening. Having said this, the management accept that some teachers were nervous during the evaluation and that management's directions were not always followed during class. As a result of this, it is management's intention to provide further training for teachers for the courses to be run in 2017.

#### **Evaluation**

Each student is examined at the beginning of the course, at end of each week (every 7 days) and again at the end of the course. A report is sent to parents as well as a certificate. Again it is intended that this evaluation system will be revised for the courses in 2017.

*(This is a translation of the response submitted by the steering committee)*