

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills**

**Inspection of a Course
in an Irish College**

REPORT

**Coláiste Chiaráin
An Cheathrú Rua, County Galway
Reference code: CGC171**

Date of inspection: 19 July 2016

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. This report on the Irish course is based on observation of teaching, learning and cultural activities, interaction with students and discussion with management, and examination of relevant documentation.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

Key findings

- The quality of teaching was good overall.
- The quality of management and leadership was good, with priority given to the safety and welfare of the students.
- The quality of planning and self-evaluation, on a whole-college basis and on an individual teacher basis, was good.
- A good effort had been made to implement the recommendations made in previous evaluations.

Main recommendations

- It is recommended that more emphasis be placed on the teaching of basic phrases during the morning classes.
- It is recommended that more effort be made to encourage students with very little Irish to learn the language and to speak it.
- It is recommended that the allocation of classes be reviewed to ensure that the most appropriate facilities are provided, for example furniture that is suitable for the age and physical size of the students.

1. QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching and learning was good overall. The inspectors observed six lessons between the college's two locations. Positive aspects were noted in the teaching of all the teachers who were inspected. The teachers were prepared for teaching, with clear lesson notes provided for the material that was to be taught.
- The teachers in each classroom that was visited had effective class management skills. A good relationship between students and teachers was evident. This relationship helped to increase learning.
- The teachers used effective teaching methods during the various lessons. They successfully ensured that the students participated in the lessons. All the lessons were presented in a positive enjoyable manner.
- All the teachers had good communication skills. They were able to present and to explain the lesson material clearly. It is recommended however that more effort be made to encourage the students themselves to engage in communication.

- The students worked well in pairs in some of the classes. To provide the students with more speaking opportunities, it is recommended that paired exercises or small-group exercises be organised as a central part of lessons.
- In a small number of cases, too much emphasis was put on teaching the Leaving Certificate curriculum. For example, a poetry lesson was observed that was solely focused on Leaving Certificate poetry. It is recommended that this practice be reduced in favour of developing students' communication skills and their wealth of language in Irish.
- Most of the students attained a good standard in the language. The students with a positive attitude, and those with a good amount of Irish already, learned a great deal more on this course. The college deserves great praise for this achievement.
- Having achieved this, however, it would be worth considering ways of encouraging the students with little Irish to speak it more, and of fostering a greater love for the language among those with a lack of interest. More emphasis on the regular teaching and practising of basic phrases, for example greetings and personal information, would help in achieving this.

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

- The students' experience of Irish language and culture was good. Outside of the formal morning lessons, for example, the staff of the college, in partnership with people from the local area, emphasised providing all the students with a rich experience of the Irish language and culture.
- Even those with only a little Irish at the beginning of the course were given a valuable experience of the culture of the Irish language and the culture of this Gaeltacht area. Irish was heard being spoken as a living language during the inspection visit.
- On the day of the inspection afternoon events were organised on the beach. These activities were well organised and it was noted that there was appropriate supervision of the students. All the students spoke Irish while taking part in the various enjoyable activities.

3. QUALITY OF LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

- The quality of leadership and management on the course was good, with elements of the management and leadership being very good. For example, it was very clear that the managers of the course prioritised the need to take care of the students. In addition, the managers of the college were keen to make improvements that would enhance the students' experience and attainment in the Irish language.
- It was confirmed that the college plan for the Irish course was available. Specifically, the quality of the college plan was good. The plan was set out clearly, with an emphasis on improving the students' language skills.
- The management of the course facilities and resources was good. The two locations in which the morning classes were held were suitable for the work at hand. Some of the benches in one building, however, were somewhat limiting for the physical size of some of the students. It is recommended that the use of furniture across all the learning settings be reviewed and that suitable chairs and desks be provided that are suitable for the age of the students.

- 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 health and safety statement, a code of behaviour and an anti-bullying policy were available. A course health and safety officer was named in the college plan.
- It was evident that good progress had been made on the implementation of recommendations previously made to the college. For example, a common approach to the teachers' planning and preparation was implemented. To improve the learning environment and experience, a good effort was made by most of the teachers to make more use of information and communication technology (ICT) in the morning lessons. It was noted that, for some time, a written record has been kept of review meetings.

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.