

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

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

REPORT

**Coláiste Uisce
Cuan Eilí, OP an Chlochair
Ballina, County Mayo
Reference Code: CGC181**

Date of inspection: 30 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 on the Irish course is based on observation of teaching, learning and cultural activities, interaction with students and discussions with management, and inspection of relevant documentation.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

Key findings

- Management of the course was of a high standard. Significant investment has been made in college facilities, the college policies have been appropriately developed, valuable support is given to the staff and course activities are well organised.
- Good teaching and learning was observed during the inspection. The learning experience would be enhanced by ensuring that the college teaching plan was implemented fully in all classes and additional provision made for students of different abilities.
- A happy, enjoyable atmosphere was created among students which fostered a positive attitude to the Irish language. Many students attained a good standard of spoken Irish, in line with their ability, and made every effort to use the Irish that they had learned.
- The college's ongoing work to develop an assessment system is commended.
- All staff displayed great diligence in their work on this course.
- The activities organised to encourage the students' interest in the Irish language and culture, were of a very good quality.

Main recommendations

- The teachers should prepare and teach appropriate language structures, based on the course plan and make provision for pupils of various abilities in all lessons.

1. QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

- On the whole the teaching and learning was of a good quality. In the best practice observed, teachers made use of the course plan as a basis for their teaching and there was progressive development in the language input being taught. Appropriate language structures, should be taught in each class.
- Creditable use was made of different teaching methods and of effective communication strategies to develop the students' verbal expression in most classes. The translation method was used in some lessons observed. It is recommended that more use be made of information and communication technology, which is available in the classrooms, and of real-life material so as to avoid direct translation. Provision should also be made for students of mixed ability, through providing them with particular activities during the lessons.
- The quality of planning was good in many classes but there were evident weaknesses in some of the planning. All teachers should make appropriate preparation for lessons and provide management with a brief account of what has been taught.
- Some of the students attained a good standard of expression in the language in line with their ability and made creditable efforts to use the language learned in different contexts. A booklet was provided, in which there were practical linguistic models, which was a useful memory aid to students.

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

- The activities organised to develop the students' experience of the Irish language and culture were of very good quality. A wide range of cultural events, as well as water adventures, field games and indoor events were organised, led by trained sports instructors, teachers and cinnirí. Significant investment has been made in sports facilities to give students a broad experience and to raise and maintain their interest in the language. Students participated enthusiastically in the various events. It is praiseworthy how students expressed themselves competently in the language regarding these activities.

3. QUALITY OF LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

- The leadership and management of the course was of a high quality. The management team comprised a principal, deputy-principal, education manager and a teacher with a post of responsibility. The chairperson provided good leadership to the staff, and he and another member of the committee were active in the daily management of the course. The management made a considerable investment in the centre itself and in its facilities. *Rial na Gaeilge* was implemented with understanding and students were suitably encouraged to speak the language.
- The policies, required under current legislation, were devised by management. The college had a beneficial self-assessment system and it was clear that the management reviewed and reflected upon its work regularly.
- It was confirmed that the college plan for the Irish course was available. The management set out a comprehensive plan for the course in which the teaching material was in line with the specific needs of the learners. It would be worthwhile, however, to regularly monitor its implementation. For that purpose, the planning template should be amended so that language structures, teaching methods and assessment strategies are delineated in it.
- The college authorities undertook their responsibilities conscientiously in relation to safety and all events were carefully supervised during the inspection.
- An effective student leadership system was in place in the college. It was clear that the *cinnirí* had a good understanding of their duties and fulfilled them enthusiastically. They diligently encouraged students to speak Irish, and to partake in classes and in the various activities.
- The Irish-language 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-language 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 health and safety officer was registered in the college plan for the Irish course.
- At a meeting with a student focus group the majority agreed that there was a wonderful atmosphere on the course. They reported that they benefited greatly from the Irish lessons and from the interactive activities that gave them opportunities to practise the language. They stated that they enjoyed the various events particularly the sailing lessons. They also reported that there was an effective incentive system in place to encourage the speaking of the language and that their Irish was improving.
- The college is working on a formal assessment system as was recommended in the last inspection. A pilot scheme was undertaken during the college's intensive Irish courses, earlier on in the year, and students' progress was clearly tracked. The management are now working on assessment criteria so that this assessment system will be adapted for these particular summer courses. To get the most benefit from the information gathered it

would be worthwhile analysing results in depth so as to track attainment and deficiency trends in the language learning. The teaching and learning programme could be reviewed accordingly.

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.

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