

Department of Education and Skills

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

REPORT

**Spleodar Leitir Mealláin
Conamara, County Galway
Reference Code: CGC202**

Date of inspection: 24 June 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. 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 techniques was perceived to be fair in the majority of lessons. A significant minority of lessons contained good methodologies.
- A good range of linguistic and cultural activities was provided for students.
- Management and leadership of the course were of a very good quality.
- A good quality plan had been developed for the course.
- Reasonably good progress had been made in implementing previous recommendations.

Main recommendations

- It is recommended that more use be made of the templates developed for short-term planning for lessons and for the self-evaluation of lessons.
- Teaching and learning in all lessons would benefit if all opportunities were exploited to differentiate learning outcomes and to consolidate learning as well as the extended use of collaborative learning.
- The teaching and learning plan for the course should be further developed, especially in regard to detail on suitable methodologies.

1. QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

- There were more weaknesses than strengths in the quality of teaching and learning. In the majority of lessons observed and good methodologies were in use in a significant minority of others.
- Best practice was evident where use was made of differentiated learning outcomes, of teaching strategies which aroused the interest of students and where the participation of students in the content of the lessons was facilitated.
- In one instance, useful summaries of students' prior knowledge were made through brainstorming in addition to good links between the subject of the lesson and the immediate surroundings of the students in the Gaeltacht.
- There was an over reliance in other lessons of the teacher as the conveyor of knowledge rather than to investigate, recognise and affirm the prior knowledge of the students. In the case of one such lesson the theme of the lesson was unsuitable for the students' ability level and confidence level in the language.
- Management has agreed a very good template for teachers' lesson notes but there was no evidence that this template was used in the lessons observed. It is recommended that an all-college approach be implemented in order to raise the standard of teaching.

- Desks were arranged in straight lines in every classroom. In one classroom, it was difficult for the teacher to circulate among the students due to the lack of space. In order to create more suitable circumstances and to facilitate the creation of communicative opportunities, it is recommended that furniture be rearranged in the classrooms.
- The amount and range of Irish visible on classroom walls was limited. Well-chosen resources were used in only one lesson, but this was a handwritten worksheet as information and communication technology was not available to design a worksheet. A review of the quality of resources and facilities available is recommended so that students might be given an up-to-date experience of teaching and learning of Irish.
- Good measures were employed to assess the progress of students in the language during the course. When students are collected on the final day oral feedback is provided for parents and a series of presentations are provided as a closure to the course.

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

- A very good range of cultural and linguistic activities was provided to students.
- Organisation and supervision of activities was effective.
- Students made good use of Irish during activities.

3. QUALITY OF LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

- Management and leadership of the course were of a very good quality.
- The steering committee has adopted the good practice of organising training days for managers, teachers and leaders. It is recommended that in addition, a system to support and monitor new teachers should be implemented for new teachers.
- The principal had developed a good quality plan for the Irish language course. To further improve the plan, three recommendations are made: a review be carried out of the themes referred to in the plan to make greater links between the language taught in the morning lessons and the cultural activities; it would be worthwhile to review planning to teach grammar on a formal basis, and it is also recommended that the strategies for teaching, learning and assessment be detailed within the plan.
- 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.
- Good progress had been made in the implementation of previous recommendations. Those concerning teaching and learning were most in need of significant improvement.

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.