

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Report on Irish Language College Course

**Coláiste Bhaile Bhúirne
Coolea, Macroom, Co. Cork
Reference Code: CGM211**

Date of inspection: 21 June 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 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 teaching and learning was of a good quality and it was clear throughout the visit that the students were enjoying and benefitting from the course.
- Among the good practices observed was the use of a range of teaching methods and effective strategies to create useful speaking opportunities for the students.
- The quality of the experience students received in Irish language and culture was good, and a wide range of well-run, stimulating afternoon and evening activities, including trips in the locality was provided for the students.
- The quality of leadership and management was good.

Main recommendations

- Strategies for appropriate differentiation in classroom practice to provide for the various levels of ability in the language should be explored to ensure that lessons are suited to the students' ability.
- A common planning approach should now be developed, which demonstrates teaching objectives, the content of the lesson, functional language and teaching methods, along with resources to be used.

1. QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The standard of teaching and learning was good.
- Among the good practices observed was the use of a range of teaching methods and effective strategies including group-work and paired-learning. Teachers in these classes used a range of active strategies to create useful speaking opportunities for the students. Strategies for appropriate differentiation in classroom practice to provide for the various levels of ability in the language should now be examined to ensure that lessons are suited to the students' ability. It would be worthwhile to create a stimulating Irish language environment in the classrooms with charts, students' work and useful phrases on display around the rooms.
- The quality of learning outcomes was good. In the lessons observed and from the meeting with a focus group of students, it was clear that students were enjoying and benefitting from the course and that they were making efforts to improve their Irish.
- This year a student assessment system was introduced. Teachers assessed students' levels of language competence at the beginning of the course, and they intended to conduct further interviews at the end of the course. It would now be worthwhile developing this system further and to use a generic template to support this valuable work. It would be worthwhile to consider sharing this information with parents.

- Overall the standard of written preparation for teaching was fair, and some teachers did not have any planning available. Some of the teachers shared the learning objectives with the students at the beginning of the lesson and this significantly assisted learning. A common planning approach should now be developed, which outlines teaching objectives, the content of the lesson, language functions and teaching methods, along with resources to be used.

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

- The quality of the Irish language and cultural experiences that students received was good. A wide range of well-run, stimulating afternoon and evening activities was provided for the students. The activities were effectively supervised by the teachers and the *ardchinnirí*. Students' participation was good during the activities observed. Phrases and language related to the activities should be taught formally as part of the course programme.

3. QUALITY OF LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

- The quality of leadership and management was good. The college was carefully managed and it was evident that there was a good relationship between the principal, the teachers and the leaders. The principal guided the work of the college enthusiastically and he promoted the students' needs and safety. Some of the teachers were experienced in teaching through the medium of Irish and in teaching in Irish language colleges.
- It was confirmed that the college's plan for the Irish language course was available. The course plan was based on the Gael Linn programme and it was reported in this document that themes and various subjects that are suitable for the students are taught. The plan also indicated that emphasis is placed on developing vocabulary, and accuracy and spoken Irish. The principal's plan was based on this document, but it was a general plan. It would now be worthwhile to develop the principal's plan in order to establish a stronger link between this plan and teaching material and the work of the teachers. Policies were available as required by the Regulations of The Department of the Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs.
- 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.
- The quality of management of the students was good. Students were allocated appropriately to the classes. Good habits of behaviour and participation were encouraged among the students by awarding points for good behaviour. It was clear from the information collected during the meeting with a focus group of students that the team had succeeded in creating a positive learning atmosphere in the college, that the students understood the Irish language rule, and that they were enjoying the course.

- Resources and materials were well-managed. The accommodation was suitable for the most part, although one room was quite small. A print rich environment should be developed to support lessons and to use as a teaching resource. There was a range of information and communication technology resources available to the teachers to support learning and to motivate the students. Teachers should use these resources more widely and more effectively.
- Coláiste Bhaile Bhúirne has made progress regarding the deputy liaison person being available on the college premises. Little progress has been made regarding the use of more effective strategies to focus on the competence skills of high-ability students.

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.