

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**

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

**REPORT**

**Coláiste Chara,  
Kilcar, County Donegal  
Reference Code: CGU191**

**Date of inspection: 5th July 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 on 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 was good, in general. The learning experience of students would be greatly enhanced if appropriate preparation was done for teaching.
- A pleasant learning atmosphere was created on the course; this facilitated the learning for students and gave them a positive attitude towards Irish.
- The students were making a great effort to learn Irish and good progress was evident amongst them.
- Students were provided with various experiences to develop their understanding of the culture and their interest in the language. It would be worthwhile adding to the variety of these activities to strengthen the programme.
- Some aspects of the management and leadership were of good quality. However, policies need to be reviewed and a graded teaching programme devised.

### **Main recommendations**

- The college authorities are advised to review and update the course policies so that they are in line with current legislation.
- The principal should delineate a structured teaching programme and appropriately monitor its implementation.
- The teachers should devise written planning on a regular basis, create a rich learning environment and prepare appropriate resources for their teaching.

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

- The quality of teaching and learning was good, in general. Lessons were well-structured and students participated keenly in them. In some classes questioning and learning strategies were used effectively to enable students to communicate in Irish. In some classes the content of the lesson was not appropriate to the age and ability levels of the students and too much emphasis was placed on the formal teaching of grammar and on the written language. It is recommended that grammar be taught in the context of language exemplars. Some teachers used the translation method. This approach could be avoided by creating a suitable learning environment and using appropriate resources, as recommended in the last inspection.
- The quality of teachers' preparation was weak. Although the college had designed a planning template, planning was not done on a regular basis. Teaching methods and assessment strategies should be included in this template. All teachers should prepare appropriately for teaching as recommended in the last inspection.
- The students participated eagerly in the learning activities and many of them displayed confidence in speaking the language. They made a great effort to speak Irish and most of them were making good progress in the language.

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

- An appropriate range of afternoon and evening activities were organised for the students to develop their experiences of the language and culture. These included outdoor and indoor sporting activities, tours and seaside games. The students themselves stated, in focus groups during the inspection, that they very much enjoyed the indoor games but that they would like more variation in the outdoor games.

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

- Although some aspects of management and leadership were of good quality, there was scope for development in other aspects. The course was well organised with a suitable timetable provided. Staff were recruited that was committed to Irish and that had a particular interest in promoting the language. The secretary of the committee provided regular support to staff.
- It was confirmed that the college's plan for the Irish course was available. This needs to be reviewed, however, so as to create a graded teaching programme that responds to the students' language needs, in particular to the communicative language required during the course. Teaching methods, learning activities, evaluation strategies, and the teaching resources should be delineated in the plan also. The principal should ensure that every teacher prepares a scheme of work that is in line with the course plan, and that teaching and learning is monitored. The effectiveness of the plan should be assessed at the end of the course. It is recommended that staff receive training before the course, particularly with regard to preparation and approaches for teaching.
- The Irish 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 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, and a code of behaviour were available. The name of a health and safety officer was not recorded in the college's plan for this Irish course. There is need to review these plans and to bring them in line with current legislation. An anti-bullying policy should also be devised.
- Students were assigned to classes according to age, thus creating an uneven distribution in the numbers in classes; this is an aspect of the work that needs to be reviewed to afford students appropriate learning opportunities. *Riail na Gaeilge* was implemented with understanding and students were encouraged to speak Irish through the implementation of appropriate incentive strategies.
- Students' ability in Irish was assessed at the beginning of the course and their progress monitored at the end of the course. It is worth analysing assessment results to identify achievement trends and deficiencies in the language learning and to review the teaching programme accordingly.
- A prefect system was in place in the college. The *cinnirí* worked diligently and provided support to the students as required. However, their duties need to be reviewed so that there is a greater emphasis on promoting Irish, rather than on maintenance tasks, particularly during the morning lessons.
- At a meeting with the student focus group, they reported that there was a happy, enjoyable atmosphere on the course. They also stated that the incentive strategies assisted them in using Irish regularly during the course. They felt they were more confident in speaking the language as a result of the classes and of the support given by teachers and *cinnirí*.
- Management ensured that the designated liaison person (DLP) and the deputy designated liaison person on the course were named in the child protection policy and their names were displayed in the college, as recommended in the previous inspection.
- Management should continue to work on improving teachers' preparation for teaching, as recommended above and in the previous inspection.

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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.