

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

**Inspection of a course
in an Irish Language College**

REPORT

**Coláiste Chú Chulainn
Bun a' Leaca, Gaoth Dobhair
Leitir Ceanainn, Contae Dhún na nGall
Reference code: CGU211**

Date of inspection: 14 July 2016



**AN ROINN OIDEACHAIS
AGUS SCILEANNA | DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION
AND SKILLS**

AN CHIGIREACTH

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 language colleges on behalf of the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs. The report of this Irish language 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 administration of this course was effective overall.
- The course staff succeeded well in enhancing the students' vocabulary, fluency and confidence in speaking Irish.
- The students showed great positivity towards Irish and towards the college's work on their behalf.
- There was a good atmosphere in the lessons inspected and the students participated in them enthusiastically. More teaching resources from pictorial sources need to be provided for these lessons.
- Satisfactory progress had been made in implementing a number of recommendations from the previous evaluation, but there was additional work to be done regarding the implementation of a number of others.
- The students' linguistic ability was assessed at the start of the course. In the morning classes, the individual teachers mostly undertook informal assessment.

Main recommendations

- It is recommended that more teaching resources from pictorial sources be provided and used to encourage and foster learning.
- It is recommended that a more formal system for assessment be implemented on the course which would include self-assessment by the individual student.

1. QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching and learning was good. The teachers displayed a high standard in their own Irish, which greatly added to the value of the morning lessons.
- During the inspection visit, lively and interesting lessons were created and teaching approaches were entertaining and varied. The learning objectives were shared clearly with the students.
- The students displayed a good standard in natural, day-to-day conversation. They displayed a positive attitude towards the language and towards the learning activities. They accepted the Irish-language rule sincerely.
- The teachers demonstrated useful preparedness for teaching. They prepared good notes which made clear reference to the content of the lessons. A very fine effort was made to adapt the teaching material to the students' levels of ability.
- Though a projector and computer were available in one class, there was a fairly limited range of resources available for the teachers to illustrate the learning content with pictorial sources. More teaching resources from pictorial sources need to be provided for the morning classes.
- The students' linguistic ability was assessed at the start of the course to ensure that they would attend a class suitable for their linguistic ability. For the most part, individual

teachers undertook informal assessment during the course. It is recommended that a more formal system for assessment be implemented now which would include self-assessment by the individual students of their level of ability and confidence in Irish, at the start, middle and end of the course.

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

- The quality of the students' experience of the Irish language and culture and of life in the Gaeltacht was good on this course. A sports class took place on the day of the inspection and this was organised with care. The students took an active part in these activities and the leadership work of the student leaders was of a good standard. The manner in which external tutors with fluent Irish participated in these activities, and in which they stimulated interest and pride in Irish games among the students, was commendable.
- Céilís, drama, talent shows and competitions between classes and between houses were organised. During interviews with a focus group of students as part of the inspection, the students indicated that they benefited from these activities. They praised the way in which they were immersed in the use of the language and in the activities of the Gaeltacht on the course.

3. QUALITY OF LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

- The quality of leadership and management was good. The course was organised capably. The principal undertook the fulfilment of his duties in a dynamic and diligent manner.
- A good relationship was shown between teachers and the student leaders and the entire staff worked well in partnership to achieve the course objectives.
- Classrooms were of a good standard as teaching locations. Significant progress had been made in relation to a particular recommendation in the previous inspection and plenty of attractive charts and notices in Irish were in use in the classrooms and throughout the college location as visual stimuli for the students.
- The course activities proceeded punctually during the inspection.
- In general, the rolls of student attendance were kept clearly with an account of the content of the lesson taught. There were small errors in the recording of attendance on two rolls, however. The previous evaluation noted that the marking was not in accordance with instructions on one roll on that course. Therefore, it would be worthwhile now for the college authorities to ensure that the codes are recorded correctly and consistently on each roll in courses organised in future. It is recommended that more instructions on the marking of rolls be provided to the teachers.
- The student focus group indicated that they were very satisfied with the management of the course.
- It was confirmed that the college's plan for the Irish course was available. This plan served satisfactorily as a teaching support for the teachers.
- The Irish course authorities confirmed that the college's steering committee has formally adopted a 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).
- Though the student focus group indicated that they knew who were the people who would help them if they had difficulties on the course, there was no sign indicating the names of the designated liaison person (DLP) or deputy DLP on prominent display in the college on the day of the inspection. Due to personnel changes in the interim, the name of the DLP did not match the name on the self-declaration form provided with the application form. It is recommended that a clear sign be displayed in the location. For parents' purposes, it could be placed on the college's website if the steering committee so wishes.

- It was confirmed that a copy of the health and safety statement, the code of behaviour and the anti-bullying policy were available. Though a health and safety officer was named on the application form, this was not clearly recorded in the college's health and safety plan for this course. It is recommended that this be included in future.
- The college policies made good mention of the management of students. Policies were prepared relating to them which were written in positive terminology, and this was commendable.
- Good progress had been made in implementing a number of recommendations from previous evaluations, but there was additional work to be done regarding the implementation of a number of others. Very good progress had been made concerning the improvement of the learning environment by adding to the printed material in it and great work had been done to include pair work and group work regularly in the lessons. Partial progress had been made, however, regarding the keeping of accurate records of students' achievements in the classes. The appeal procedures were not noted in the code of behaviour provided on the day of inspection; their inclusion had been recommended in the report of the most recent evaluation. The staff and management are commended for the good work done to date but more remains to be done in respect of other items.

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.