

Department of Education and Skills

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

REPORT

**Coláiste an Phiarsaigh
Dunlewey, County Donegal
Reference Code: GGU241**

Date of inspection: 11 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, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (DAHRRGA). 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 overall quality of the organised activities to develop the students' interest in the language and culture was good.
- The teaching and learning was commendable in a minority of classes; however, there was clear scope for development in a minority of classes in respect of the learning objectives and the provision of opportunities to students to communicate during lessons.
- The students' differing levels of ability were not taken into account appropriately in particular classes.
- In two classrooms, there was a limited amount of space available for the morning classes.

Main recommendations

- The staff should provide suitable opportunities for the students to communicate during lessons.
- The course programme should be tailored to better accommodate the varying language abilities of the students.
- The management must provide suitable classrooms for all classes in the college.

1. QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Overall, there was scope for development in respect of teaching and learning, notwithstanding the good-quality practice observed in a small number of classes. In classes where the best practice was observed, the language input was well structured, speaking opportunities were provided to the students, and information and communication technology was used effectively. Such good practice should be implemented in all classes.
- In a minority of classes, the planning was not suitable in regard to using learning outcomes to reflect certain goals. The teaching methodologies for communication were not implemented satisfactorily and there were no strategies in place in regard to assessment for learning. Adequate speaking opportunities were not provided to the students during the lessons observed in a minority of classes.
- The management is advised to set out a comprehensive plan for the course in which the teaching material, methodologies and assessment strategies are appropriate to addressing the learners' specific needs.
- There is need to ensure that every teacher prepares appropriately for the morning classes.

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

- The language and cultural events organised in the afternoon in order to develop the students' experience of the Irish language and culture were of a good quality. In the

music class observed, there was structure to the lesson, rich language input and the students were involved actively in the singing activities.

3. QUALITY OF LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

- The quality of leadership and management was fair in several areas, with scope for development in regard to guidance and monitoring of planning for the morning classes. The principal generally provided good leadership in relation to the daily management of the course.
- It was confirmed that the college's plan for the Irish course was available. The general organisation of the course was effective in regard to attending to supervision and student safety and management needs, but the course plan for teaching and learning required development. A whole-college planning approach should be implemented and a template designed for this purpose.
- Policies were available as required. The various course leaders fulfilled their duties diligently and they encouraged the students successfully to take part in various events.
- At a meeting with a focus group of students, the majority agreed that there was a good atmosphere on the course.
- 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, 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 management should review the accommodation provision and the facilities provided to the students.
- The management has made progress on the recommendations made previously. They have tested the students' speaking ability in order to assess their progress and to assign students to classes according to their abilities. They have enhanced the written safety policy in respect of student safety when walking on the road. There is now a need to make progress on the recommendations in respect of a mentoring system to provide assistance and guidance to newly appointed teachers to ensure the consistent use of effective teaching methods. It was also recommended that the principal examines the planning and work programme of individual teachers to ensure that learning is developed on a daily basis.

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.

