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Mr O James
Headteacher
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Dear Mr James

Ofsted 2010–11 subject survey inspection programme: modern languages

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and pupils during my visit on 21 September 2010 to look at work in modern languages.

The visit provided valuable information which will contribute to our national evaluation and reporting. Published reports are likely to list the names of the contributing institutions but individual institutions will not be identified in the main text without their consent.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included: interviews with staff and pupils; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work; and observation of two lessons.

Achievement in languages

- Pupils are very enthusiastic about learning French and about France. They have fun when learning and believe that it is important to learn a language.
- They have very good recall of previous learning and respond well and quickly to the teacher's use of French.
- Pupils of all ages speak confidently and have good accents and intonation. They have a very good understanding of sound spelling links and this supports them when they are reading out loud.
- All pupils are accurate copywriters and higher attaining pupils of all ages can write at length. They are starting to use the language creatively.

- Pupils are also adept at dictionary use and those in Year 6 are developing more advanced reading skills, such as the use of context to help them work out meanings. Older pupils can read and respond to a range of written language.
- Pupils work together very responsibly and use self-assessment well to help them improve.

Quality of teaching in languages

- Lesson planning is exemplary. The teacher gives considerable thought to the skills she wants to develop and sets very clear learning objectives. Written work is well differentiated and stretches the higher attaining pupils very well.
- Lessons are structured well and the focus on developing language learning skills and knowledge about language is good. Activities are varied and stimulate pupils very well. Although the teacher uses a wide range of resources, the use of information and communication technology to support greater independence is still underdeveloped. This has already been identified by the school as an area for development.
- The teacher uses the expertise of the class teachers and learning support assistants very well to ensure that all pupils can participate. The teacher knows the pupils very well, promotes strong working relationships and engenders great enjoyment in the lessons.
- The teacher uses a clear and accurate model of French and this supports pupils' clarity of pronunciation. Occasionally, the teacher speaks in English when she could model an instruction. This deprives pupils of opportunities to extend their listening skills.
- The effectiveness of ongoing assessment is outstanding. The teacher checks on understanding regularly in lessons and reinforces if necessary. Marking is of very high quality: it explains why work is good as well as indicating clearly what the pupils need to do to improve. Marking is also used very well to comment on how well a pupil is participating in class. Good plans are in place for formal summative assessment to reflect the new focus on skill development. It is not always clear, however, on the planned assessment sheets what achievement might mean in terms of exactly what pupils know, understand and can do.

Quality of the curriculum in languages

- Specialist lessons have a generous time allocation. The presence of the class teachers in the room when the specialist teacher is teaching ensures that it is clear what needs to be reinforced during the week.
- Very good use has been made of the Framework for Key Stage 2 and plans are carefully audited to ensure that the five strands of learning are covered comprehensively. Long-term plans show that modern languages are tailored very well to the core curriculum with cross-curricular links being well exploited. The more detailed medium-term plans indicate that

the topics are matched well to the school's and pupils' needs. A very clear line of progression is built into the plans for Years 3 to 6 in particular so that pupils are being increasingly challenged.

- The work in the classroom is enhanced well by extra-curricular activities. As well as annual inter-school 'boules' competitions and singing projects, the school has established links with a school in Nice. Pupils have already exchanged letters and teachers from France have visited the school. These activities all support pupils' understanding of French culture very well.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in languages

- Senior leaders' support for modern languages is excellent. The presence of a subject leader as well as a specialist teacher raises the status of the subject in the school. Languages have been part of the school's provision for many years and they have developed extremely well as the school has become increasingly independent of the support provided by the local secondary school. Entitlement to learn a language in Key Stage 2 is met very well.
- Senior leaders have a very clear picture of where modern languages fit in the school. It is evident that French has a key role to play in the development of pupils' intercultural understanding as part of the International School work.
- The evaluation of the strengths and areas for development of the subject is very specific and accurate. The school development plan focuses very well on pupils' achievement.
- Pupils' progress and the quality of specialist teaching are very well monitored by the subject leader.
- Pupils' progress is also reported to parents and detailed information on experience and achievement by the end of Year 6 is passed on to the secondary school to support effective transition.
- The school involves itself very well with the local network of schools and takes the lead in moving local provision forward. The skills of the specialist teacher have been recognised by the local authority; she has been appointed lead teacher and has already led in-service training.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring that the use of French by the teacher is maximised to support the development of pupils' listening skills
- refining the assessment sheets to ensure that it is clear what pupils have to know, understand and do.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop languages in the school.

As I explained previously, a copy of this letter will be published on the Ofsted website. It may be used to inform decisions about any future inspection.

Except in the case of academies, a copy of this letter is also being sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

Anne Looney
Her Majesty's Inspector