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Mrs M A Dales
Headteacher
Our Lady and St Edward Catholic Primary School and Nursery
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Dear Mrs Dales

Ofsted 2010–11 subject survey inspection programme: modern languages (ML)

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and pupils, during my visit on 13 January 2011 to look at work in ML.

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; observation of two lessons and an assembly.

Achievement in languages

- Pupils have achieved a lot in French in a very short time. The school taught Spanish until July 2010. They taught French in Year 6 in 2009/10 because the associated secondary school, where almost all pupils go, does not teach Spanish. This was successful and so they moved to French in September 2010 for all year groups.
- Pupils are confident speakers and listen very well in lessons. Their recall is generally very good and they were able to recount to the inspector much of what they had learnt since they began learning French last term.
- They speak mainly in phrases or full sentences with good pronunciation.
- Pupils are developing their reading and writing skills well at the same time as their speaking skills. Evidence in books demonstrates this.
- Because knowledge about language is an integral part of lessons, they are developing some grammatical awareness and sound spelling links.

- They have a growing intercultural awareness and are very sure of why learning a language is important.
- Pupils enjoy learning French and spoke very highly of their lessons, cross-curricular work and the support they receive from teachers.

Quality of teaching in languages

- The large majority of teaching is good with much that is outstanding. For example: very good, detailed planning; high expectations; the drive to keep to French from Year 3 onwards and ensure that pupils can say routine phrases; the consistent emphasis on getting pupils to deduce meaning; the good variety of activities to achieve the lesson objectives; the excellent assessment in lessons using mini whiteboards or circulating to help pupils who need it, as well as very good marking; and differentiation to ensure that pupils can reach their potential.
- Occasionally, there was insufficient modelling and practice before pupils were required to produce their own language and a few of them struggled to produce the correct question form.
- Pupils who speak French at home are used very well to 'teach' their peers, which the children like very much, and also excellent use is made of additional staff to support pupils and monitor progress in the lesson.
- Excellent records of achievement have been produced level by level for each year group in Key Stage 2 and pupils could describe them. They are completed by pupils and corroborated by the teacher. Reports on progress are also sent home to parents.

Quality of the curriculum in languages

- The curriculum is very well-considered with detailed schemes of work. It is stimulating and includes much cross-curricular work which pupils enjoy, such as work in science, art and numeracy. Although all year groups are currently working on the same content, it is clear that older pupils are learning in a more mature way and achieving more.
- Suitable time is provided on the timetable; one hour a week, followed by embedding at other times in lessons.
- Excellent activities enrich the curriculum, such as a whole-school French breakfast day, an international week and a link with Mexico. A link with a French school is currently being planned. Assemblies are also used as times to celebrate French, for example by saying prayers in French and singing.
- The large number of home languages within the school are also celebrated.
- A wealth of displays in classrooms, corridors and the hall supports learning, both through consolidation of language work and intercultural understanding. Pupils use this spontaneously.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in languages

- Senior leaders, including governors, are very supportive of ML. A link governor is currently being sought as the previous person has left the governing body. The Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 also learn French and a separate teacher is funded to do this.
- The subject leader leads the subject very competently with a passion and enthusiasm which transfers itself to the rest of the school. The ethos for language learning is excellent.
- The school development plan prioritises ML; the ML policy and plan are detailed and underpin the development of French in the school very well.
- Monitoring of provision is in place and includes some lesson observation, 'drop in and see' sessions, and teaching assistant observation. As a result of monitoring, provision in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 was changed earlier in the year to provide more appropriate learning.
- The rationale for changing from Spanish to French is good as is that to employ external teachers. The school provides very good opportunities for staff professional development such that it may well be able to move to a classroom teacher-based approach in the future.
- The school liaises with other schools in the area including its associated main secondary school and a transition unit at the end of Year 6 for Year 7 is in place.
- Entitlement in Key Stage 2 is very well met.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring that there is sufficient modelling and practice of new material in lessons before pupils are expected to produce it in pair work
- ensuring that progression through Key Stage 2 is planned as each year group moves through the school.

I hope that 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

Pam Haezewindt
Her Majesty's Inspector