

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 0300 123 1231
F 020 7421 6855
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



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Mrs L Stephenson
Headteacher
St Mary's Church of England Primary School
Hatfield Broad Oak
Bishop's Stortford
Hertfordshire
CM22 7HH

Dear Mrs Stephenson

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 20 October 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

- Since 2008, all Key Stage 2 pupils have been learning French in their mixed-age classes. Most pupils like learning languages, a testament to the enthusiasm with which language learning is approached in the school. They behave well in lessons.
- They listen very attentively and are willing to 'have a go' in responding even though they are not always sure of the answers.
- Pupils read and match early in their learning. By Years 3 and 4, they were matching classroom instructions to symbols showing good understanding.
- They also attempt writing using a paradigm or writing frame, writing at both word and sentence level, but some make mistakes because they have not had enough time to assimilate new information.
- Because they listen well to the DVDs, pupils generally have good pronunciation.

- They know the essentials of the importance of learning a language and can talk a little about France, its culture and know some French-speaking countries.

Quality of teaching in languages

- Teaching is variable but has many good features, including the enthusiasm with which staff embrace providing a good learning environment in lessons.
- High expectations make pupils think hard. Pace and challenge are good. The range of activities available is good which includes group and pair work and pupils particularly like the challenge of competitions.
- Lessons are planned well using the scheme chosen and resources selected by the school. There are occasions where the scheme needs to be added to so that pupils are given more practice before being required to produce language. The subject coordinator is aware of this and has given a presentation to staff about it.
- French is not used as often as it could be for routine communication in the classroom. For example, for praising pupils, or asking them to do things.

Quality of the curriculum in languages

- Despite the need to develop further activities to expand the chosen scheme, provision is good.
- The coordinator has ensured that the mixed-age classes in this small school do not repeat anything in the external scheme.
- It interests pupils and contributes to their enjoyment. It also ensures that there are good role-models via DVDs and videos for pupils to follow. This is particularly important where teachers still feel less confident.
- Suitable time is allocated although more could be made of time beyond the discrete lesson time.
- Intercultural awareness is developed through a range of opportunities in and beyond school including an annual Year 5/6 visit to France where they have to use their French to shop as well as encounter intercultural similarities and differences.
- The school's activities in pursuit of their full international school's award also support well pupils' intercultural development.
- Formative assessment is built into provision; the school is at the stage of deciding how it is going to assess attainment more formally appraising new documentation from agencies such as The Centre for Language Teaching (CILT).

Effectiveness of leadership and management in languages

- The school opted for French as it realised that training and development opportunities for staff would be most accessible. It has now been taught

since 2008 to all Key Stage 2 pupils and Key Stage 1 pupils also learn some basic vocabulary and songs.

- French is part of the school development plan on an ongoing basis although success criteria are not identified.
- There is a good policy for language learning.
- Though no formal self-evaluation takes place, you and the subject coordinator have a clear view of the strengths and areas for improvement.
- Staff training in liaison with the local authority is a strength and has ensured that the school has made good progress towards achieving entitlement for Key Stage 2.
- Subject leadership is good; the coordinator has a good understanding of the current needs and how to go about fulfilling these. Plans for further staff training are excellent.
- Monitoring, including student voice and governor monitoring, has contributed well, in the past, to development and this is due to be repeated in November this year.
- Links with secondary schools regarding transition pose problems because pupils tend to attend secondary schools in another county. The coordinator is aware that this needs to be tackled.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring teaching makes more use of French for routine transactions in lessons, for example, for praise and requests
- expanding the chosen scheme to include more practice activities so that pupils are capable of communicating orally and in writing more accurately
- embedding formal assessment into teaching, learning and the curriculum so that pupils, teachers and the next school are aware of outcomes and pupils know better how to improve.

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. A copy of this letter is also being sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

Pam Haezewindt
Her Majesty's Inspector