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Mrs Tracy Holmes
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Holmes

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 2 December 2010 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.

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

Achievement in languages

- Pupils develop a very strong understanding of cultural similarities and differences between countries. These include the countries where the languages being studied are spoken and others developed as part of the school's international focus.
- Their interest in languages and their confidence in speaking are very good because of the excellent curriculum design and the high profile given to languages across the school.
- Pupils are able to read aloud with confidence and even tackle previously unseen words with some success because teachers consistently teach sound spelling links and model good pronunciation themselves.
- They develop good language learning strategies which enable them to make good progress in Years 5 and 6 when they study their second language.

- Pupils are developing good listening skills because teachers use an appropriate amount of the languages being studied to manage their lessons. They also make good use of recordings of, and contact with native speakers.
- They are confident and willing to participate in meaningful conversations and role play because teachers build ample opportunities to practise into their lessons.
- Writing is their least well developed skill and, in particular, more able pupils are not developing the ability to be creative and write at more length as they move up the school.

Quality of teaching in languages

- Teachers have good subject knowledge and communicate their passion for languages to their pupils, who greatly appreciate the excellent resources that they produce for their lessons.
- Lessons contain a good mixture of different activities, which include games. Good use is made of information and communication technology and other technical equipment such as cameras, voice recorders and interactive whiteboards.
- Lessons proceed at a brisk pace and engagement is generally high. Occasionally the pace of learning drops for some pupils when whole-class repetition drills and teacher-to-pupil question and answer sessions do not actively involve all pupils, especially the least able.
- Plans to develop summative assessment are well-advanced and teachers use an adequate range of techniques during lessons to check how well pupils are progressing. The school does not currently provide information on pupils' attainment in order to support transition to secondary schools.
- Teachers do not regularly provide opportunities for pupils to develop their ability to read longer texts.
- Writing tasks are generally limited to short answers and substitution exercises. Some opportunities are provided for more able pupils to be creative with language, but those in Year 6 need more opportunities to write at length.

Quality of the curriculum in languages

- The strong outcomes for pupils are linked directly to the excellent curriculum which the school has put in place for delivering pupils' entitlement. Despite adjustments that have had to be made to the languages being offered, a sustainable model has quickly been established and its positive impact is already being felt by the main feeder secondary school.
- The curriculum is imaginative and stimulating and the wealth of enrichment and extra-curricular opportunities is greatly enjoyed by large numbers of pupils.

- Progression is supported well and as a result of the effective teaching of language learning strategies, pupils make rapid progress in Years 5 and 6 when they change from learning French to learning Spanish. This equips them well for their move to any of the increasing number of secondary schools to which pupils transfer.
- Exceptionally interesting and colourful displays all around the school inspire and support pupils.
- There are links with schools abroad and the subject leader is very pro-active in seeking out people in the local community who have language skills that they can use.
- Schemes of work are well-organised into a coherent teaching programme across each of the two years in the two languages.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in languages

- You and the governing body are very supportive of ML both through generous funding and by including the subject in all aspects of the school's monitoring and development planning. The excellent practice seen in evaluating the work in ML against the Ofsted subject grade criteria is guiding developments in the subject exceptionally well.
- The subject leader is well placed to keep ahead of developments in the subject through her leading role in local partnerships. She conveys her passion for the subject to the other ML teachers and their morale is high.
- An area for development which the school recognises is the need to provide more information for parents and carers on how they might support their children's learning.
- The governing body has a representative who is linked to the subject area and self-evaluation involves gathering evidence from a wide range of sources, including the views of pupils.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- providing more regular opportunities for more able pupils to develop their ability to write at length in the languages studied, especially in Year 6
- developing assessment practice in order to inform and support progression to secondary 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

Elaine Taylor
Her Majesty's Inspector