

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

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



15 February 2010

Mr M Perry
St Peter's Church of England Aided School
Quarry Lane
Heavitree
Exeter
Devon
EX2 5AP

Dear Mr Perry

Ofsted 2009-10 subject survey inspection programme: modern languages

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and for the help of your staff and students, during my visit on 3 and 4 February 2010 to look at work in modern languages.

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of the subject, the visit had a particular focus on take-up in Key Stage 4, and the use of information and communication technology (ICT) to improve language learning.

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 students, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work and observation of seven lessons.

Achievement in languages

Achievement in languages is good.

- Standards in modern languages have risen since 2006 although there was a slight drop in GCSE results in 2009. As measured by national examinations, standards are slightly below average. However, significantly more students are entered for GCSE in at least one language than is the case nationally and the proportion of the cohort, as opposed to the entry, attaining grades A* to C is above the national average. Standards are higher in Spanish and French than in German. Students make good progress over their time at the school.

- In lessons, students make good gains in learning. Their behaviour in lessons is at least good and their attitudes are positive. Their intercultural understanding and their language learning skills are particularly well developed and all students value the school's specialist language college status and the opportunities it brings.
- Students listen well and develop a good understanding of grammatical structures. They can manipulate these well using a model. Higher attaining students can write at length and use complex language by the end of Key Stage 3.
- The senior subject leaders have analysed examination outcomes well and identified that independent speaking is the least well-developed skill. Additional support for oral work has been put in place and an increased focus on phonics in Year 7 has led to greater confidence and better pronunciation when students meet unfamiliar language. Students preparing for examinations are still too reliant on written prompts when they speak.

Quality of teaching in languages

The quality of teaching in languages is good.

- Teachers are enthusiastic about their subject and establish good working relationships in the classroom. Teachers' expectations of their students are high.
- Lessons are planned carefully to make effective use of a range of resources and activities. Occasionally, lesson objectives are insufficiently explicit in terms of what skill is being developed and what different groups should achieve.
- Teachers model the languages they teach well. Their use of the target language is supported well by well-chosen language, gestures and visuals to help students understand. Teachers' extensive use of the language also serves to continually develop students' listening skills.
- Marking is regular and some very good guidance on how to improve work was seen in students' books. Not all teachers are consistently indicating how work might be improved and significant errors occasionally go uncorrected. Students are becoming increasingly involved in assessment of their work and that of others.

Quality of the curriculum in languages

The quality of the curriculum is outstanding.

- Schemes of work provide a good level of guidance on what to teach and how to assess. They are constantly reviewed and this has resulted, for example, in a change to the Year 7 curriculum which both builds well on students' primary languages experience and supports transition.
- The curriculum is matched exceptionally well to students' needs. Outcomes for students are analysed carefully and programmes best suited

to their needs are introduced. The Arabic course is used well in Year 7 to develop students' skills for learning; the newly introduced National Vocational Qualification in Year 9 has had a very positive impact on students' attitudes; and the very wide choice at Key Stage 4 exemplifies the school's inclusive approach to languages. Early examination entry in Years 9 and 10 provides challenge and encourages many students to think in terms of studying two languages as the norm. The chance to study AS level in Key Stage 4 stretches the higher attainers and eases the transition of linguists into further study.

- The curriculum is very well enhanced with an excellent and varied choice of language visits, exchanges, business contacts and competitions. These are highly valued by students.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in languages

The effectiveness of the leadership and management in languages is good.

- You and your senior colleagues provide a good level of support for the subject's development. This is reflected in the allocation of resources and teaching time, and the training opportunities for the staff who are involved.
- Teachers work well together. The new acting subject learning leader is being inducted well into her post and both you and the senior teachers in the department have a clear idea of what the strengths and areas for improvement are. These are clearly expressed in the self-evaluation documents.
- Support for the development of primary modern languages is very well developed. Very good use is made of local authority and school partnerships to ensure that primary schools develop a strategic and sustainable approach to languages in Key Stage 2. A significant role is also played by the school in the training of primary teachers.
- Partnerships with local businesses, educational institutions and specialist networks are used very well to support language learning.
- The work of the department is monitored on a regular basis and a more informal and formative approach to lesson observation is now developing. Lesson feedback following observation, while detailed, does not focus sufficiently on progress and learning.

Subject issue: how close the school is to reaching the benchmarks for language take-up in Key Stage 4

- This is an area of strength. Uptake at Key Stage 4 has been consistently high and exceeds the government's requirements.
- The option structure and early entry for examinations actively support the possibility of dual and even triple languages as a choice.

Subject issue: how well ICT is used to improve language learning

This is satisfactory.

- The department is very well equipped, teachers' knowledge of the latest technology is good and the department makes good use of the school's virtual learning environment.
- Teachers use interactive whiteboards effectively to present and practise language and students value the variety that this technology brings. Not all students, however, are using ICT themselves on a regular basis to enhance their language learning.
- The vision for the use of ICT and how it might best enhance learning is not clear. The leadership of ICT within the subject is developing but there is, as yet, no ongoing evaluation of the impact of ICT on students' learning.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- further developing students' skills in independent speaking
- ensuring that learning objectives are always specific in terms of which skill/s is/are to be developed and what each group of students should achieve
- developing a clear rationale for the use of ICT and ensuring that using ICT benefits all students' language learning.

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

As I explained in my previous letter, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority and will be published on the Ofsted website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Anne Looney
Her Majesty's Inspector