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Mr S Bellworthy
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Bellworthy

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 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 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 a morning registration and two lessons.

Achievement in languages

- Pupils are enthusiastic about learning French. They like the active nature of the subject and say that they like learning about different languages. Although the youngest pupils are less confident about 'having a go', generally pupils participate well in class.
- Pupils' recall of a range of vocabulary is good but they have more difficulty remembering the structures that would help them talk in a more extensive fashion. Their pronunciation is good and they make a big effort to copy accurately what they hear.
- They listen well to both the teachers' French and recorded language. Older pupils observed showed a good understanding of how to pick out key words from quite complex recorded French. The development of pupils' listening skills is impeded by the amount of English spoken by teachers in lessons.

- Pupils show a good understanding of the differences in written and spoken language and are developing an appropriate level of grammatical understanding.
- They can copy accurately although the majority are, at this stage, operating at word level. Some higher ability pupils are attempting to use more complex language, such as adjectives, to extend their work.
- Pupils have a more limited understanding of similarities and differences between their own culture and those cultures where French is spoken across the world.

Quality of teaching in languages

- Teachers generally provide an accurate model of the key language that pupils are to learn and support presentation well with authentic recorded materials. On the whole, too much English is used in lessons and this limits the opportunities for pupils to hear French. Teachers explain what they want pupils to do in English rather than model with the support of gestures and visual material.
- Teachers make use of a good range of resources and plan lively activities which pupils enjoy.
- Lessons are planned with clear learning objectives and activities designed to help pupils learn what is planned. However, pupils do not always have enough opportunities to practise the new language before they are asked to produce it independently.
- There is some informal assessment and good use of self-evaluation sheets completed by pupils.

Quality of the curriculum in languages

- The school is making appropriate use of a range of published materials to ensure that the curriculum content is broad. A series of materials is currently in use, but although coverage of topics is good, there is no clear progression path in terms of developing skills as opposed to learning topic vocabulary. The school is aware, that the long-term overview of the scheme of work for Key Stage 2 which makes it explicit what pupils should learn by the end of Year 6, needs to be reviewed.
- The teaching of French by the class teachers allows flexibility in terms of follow-up during the week. Pupils were observed, for example, using registration time to practise greetings in French.
- The French Day, which took place towards the end of the first year of full implementation of French in Key Stage 2, was much enjoyed by pupils. It was effective in raising the profile of modern languages in the school and in integrating languages more into the wider curriculum.
- Teachers use information and communication technology well to present and practise language.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in languages

- Senior leaders show good support for this relatively new curriculum development. Implementation in 2009/10 was planned carefully and the school's development plan indicates clearly how the effectiveness was to be reviewed. The subject action plan for 2009/10 was well focused on the important issues and it is evident how progress and impact were monitored. There is less detail in this plan about how the work in the equally crucial second year is to be developed and evaluated.
- Initial professional development from the local authority was used well, particularly to support the modern languages coordinator in her own linguistic and teaching skills. There was some training for other class teachers but it has not been sufficient to develop the level of linguistic confidence that they need. Both you and the coordinator have a good understanding of what teachers' training needs are and you are making strenuous efforts to source that training.
- There are limited links to local secondary schools with regard to languages.
- Entitlement to learn a language in Key Stage 2 is met satisfactorily.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- securing the necessary training to ensure that staff have the confidence to teach the subject
- establishing a clear overview of what you want the pupils to learn in terms of the development of language learning skills and intercultural understanding
- using as much target language as possible in the classroom, as a model for pupils' own use and to develop their listening skills.

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

Anne Looney
Her Majesty's Inspector