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Ms S Peters  
Headteacher  
Harlescott Junior School  
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Dear Ms Peters

### **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 3 February 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; and observation of two lessons.

### **Achievement in languages**

- Pupils have been learning French for about two years and most are making progress in line with the school's targets to meet national expectations by 2013. This progress is uneven across the four skills, better in speaking and listening than reading and writing, where higher attainers make more progress.
- Pupils are very enthusiastic and like the various games, songs and stories which form a key part of their lessons. They recognise the advantages of language learning and talk about how Polish pupils have needed to learn English.
- They work effectively in pairs to learn new language, are beginning to understand the importance of gender and pronounce French words well. They have particularly good recall of topics they learnt earlier and remember vocabulary such as numbers and days of the week through songs. They have really enjoyed the well-known stories they have read in French from the interactive whiteboard. The school has very few pupils

whose first language is not English. Their experience is valued, for example in discussing the similarity between Polish and French words describing fruit.

- Pupils are learning to use the newly learnt vocabulary in simple sentences. They are good at asking questions which is one of their favourite activities. The lack of appropriate information and communication technology (ICT) provision restricts their opportunity to learn independently, particularly out of lessons.
- Pupils are confident speakers both among themselves and with adults. They understand that French is spoken in countries other than France. A 'nurture class' for pupils with special educational and/or disabilities has made particularly good progress in speaking and listening.

### **Quality of teaching in languages**

- Enthusiastic teaching is enabling pupils to make progress. Teachers make commendable efforts to present good examples of spoken French in their own speaking and through recordings. They are growing in confidence in their presentation and use of language and they have made significant efforts to improve their personal standards to present a good model.
- Teachers' planning provides a variety of activities which encourages and entuses pupils, encouraging them to speak and listen in pairs and groups, although planning is not always based on their formal knowledge of pupils' prior attainment.
- Other adults help to support group work. Just occasionally, a group left to work alone may lose concentration and lapse into English, but adults quickly re-focus them. Displays in classrooms provide good awareness of France and other countries.
- Assessment is not yet in place; teachers are not formally recording outcomes of language learning and pupils do not have a structured understanding of their attainment or progress.
- The use of ICT is not sufficiently developed in ML learning. Despite their occasional use of interactive whiteboards, pupils do not use computers to support their learning.

### **Quality of the curriculum in languages**

- The curriculum is based on the Languages Ladder, the Key Stage 2 Framework, several commercial courses, a range of stories on DVD and a range of screens for the interactive whiteboards developed in the school by the subject leader. It provides a sound basis for French teaching in the school. All teachers teach French within a programme at the beginning of the day called 'Focus' where pupils also study the culture of several other countries as well as France.
- Activities are focused principally on listening and speaking. Reading of stories is a plenary activity which pupils enjoy because they are familiar with the stories and interested to hear and see them in French. More able pupils are expected to do more reading and writing.

- The current emphasis on speaking and listening has been effective in bringing ML learning to its present stage. Planned development of reading and writing is not yet as effective. The curriculum for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities focuses on speaking and listening and has been effective in developing good attitudes and progress. Classrooms have French reading books and some have books in community languages, especially in Polish. Parents were invited to a 'French Café' event where pupils served a French breakfast.

### **Effectiveness of leadership and management in languages**

- The leader for ML has come into post relatively recently and has further developed the structure which was already in place. He is a supportive role model for other teachers and has been particularly effective in developing materials for non-specialist teachers of French to use.
- The school has a policy in place for the development of ML learning, which sets out a clear pathway for all pupils to reach the expected levels for their age by 2013. However, this policy does not include subject-specific targets such as the use of target language in teaching and learning, and the development of reading and writing. Following many changes in the leadership team, the school has no current self-evaluation of ML in place.
- The adviser and primary ML consultant from the LA have given considerable support, and good partnerships have been established with the languages department in the community high school. Through these, staff have been provided training and ongoing support is available. Pupils said how much they enjoyed the French lesson during their visit to the high school.

### **Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:**

- developing an assessment framework for ML and improving teachers' use of the framework to inform self-evaluation, support teachers' planning and motivate pupils
- making opportunities available for pupils to use ICT for independent learning
- adding specific targets on reading, writing and the use of target language in teaching and learning to the ML policy.

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

**Peter McKenzie**  
**Additional Inspector**