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Miss L Messom
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Dear Miss Messom

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 9 March 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 achieve well in French across Key Stage 2. They greatly enjoy learning languages and can give reasons why it is important to do so. Some were able to give sophisticated reasons concerning the breaking down of barriers and increased mutual understanding. They are developing this good intercultural understanding through links with other countries, especially Nepal. However, they are less knowledgeable about French culture. The school has recently increased opportunities to interact with native speakers through new links with the country.
- The four skills are developing equally well because the scheme of work has an appropriate emphasis on how this will be supported across the four years of study. Pupils listen and respond well to the teacher. They are willing speakers with satisfactory pronunciation. They have a satisfactory understanding of grammatical functions.

- By the time they reach Year 6, some are able to manipulate language for their own purposes and can create more extended passages of writing. Pupils reported that they enjoy reading stories in French. An appropriate emphasis on sound/spelling links is helping to support their development as language learners.

Quality of teaching in languages

- The subject specialist uses her very good skills as a primary practitioner to good effect in lessons. As a result, the pace is brisk and very good use is made of talk partners to maximise participation, by practising new phrases or by discussing the possible reasons for differences and similarities between languages.
- Subject knowledge is satisfactory and appropriate use is made of the language being studied to manage the everyday classroom tasks.
- Lessons have a good assortment of activities. Pupils particularly enjoy the games. Good use is made of songs in lessons and well-rehearsed routines minimise the need for explanation in English.
- The teacher makes good use of information and communication technology (ICT) through the interactive whiteboard and recordings of native speakers. Pupils use computers well to support the development of their writing and speaking, through recordings which are used for peer- and self-review.
- Assessment is developing well. Regular checks ensure that all pupils are successfully covering the skills and topics in the scheme of work. The progress of individual pupils is not yet tracked, but firm plans are in place for the transfer of information on final outcomes to the secondary school. Assessment, as the lesson proceeds, is a strong feature and pupils regularly assess their own and each other's work. Marking is very developmental where appropriate.
- Suitably challenging tasks are set for different levels of ability. Weaker pupils are supported well by teaching assistants or the class teacher. This is ensuring that all pupils engage fully in the lessons and make good progress.

Quality of the curriculum in languages

- A strength of the curriculum is the joint planning which is ensuring good transition from the primary to the secondary phase across the family of schools. The close working allows good opportunities for sharing good practice. Regular visits by the subject leader in the main receiving secondary school support the teaching and curriculum development well.
- Long-term planning is based on the Key Stage 2 Framework. It meets the needs of pupils well and contributes to their enjoyment. The subject leader is revising the medium-term planning, which currently does not support progression as clearly as it could.

- Pupils gain experience of French culture through the use of ICT, but opportunities are missed to reinforce their understanding during lessons.
- Reading books in French are on display and greatly enjoyed by pupils.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in languages

- Good planning and a clear vision for what the school wants from ML provision have ensured that French has been successfully introduced across Key Stage 2. The subject leader is well informed about current developments and has written a far reaching and ambitious policy for the subject.
- You are committed to developing languages. Development plans highlight appropriate needs and include the development of teaching to support sustainability.
- The subject has similar status to other foundation subjects and expectations regarding monitoring and evaluation are the same. Systems for these are thorough and regular. Monitoring considers a good range of evidence including pupils' evaluations and direct observation of teaching. There is good evidence of improvements in the curriculum, which have been a direct result of this system.
- Governors are supportive and knowledgeable of issues in the subject. The link governor has expertise in and a commitment to ML. She regularly gathers first-hand information on successes and issues in ML by email and other communications and through visits.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- planning more opportunities in lessons for the reinforcement of cultural understanding
- refining medium-term planning to ensure that progression is securely established and shared with pupils.

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