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28 March 2011

Mrs P Mason  
Headteacher  
Marshalls Park School  
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Dear Mrs Mason

### **Ofsted 2010–11 subject survey inspection programme: modern languages (ML)**

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and students, during my visit on 15 and 16 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 students; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of students' work; and observation of six lessons.

The overall effectiveness of ML is satisfactory.

#### **Achievement in languages**

Achievement in languages is satisfactory.

- All groups of students make satisfactory progress as they move through the school. Standards are below average at the end of Key Stage 4, but the gap with national standards is closing steadily. Significantly fewer students gain the top two grades. Standards are above average in Key Stage 3, as seen by the very positive outcomes in entry level qualifications taken by Year 9 students in 2010.
- Most learners are committed to learning languages and show enthusiasm for doing so. A significant success has been the increased progress made by students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, which is now good. The progress of boys and girls is similar.
- Students can apply grammatical rules to new situations and they develop the ability to write at length, with support, as they move through the school. Students are less able to use their speaking skills creatively or independently in lessons.

- Intercultural understanding is limited to stereotypical answers. Students are aware of the usefulness of languages.

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

The quality of teaching in languages is satisfactory.

- Teachers are enthusiastic and students appreciate the games and activities they devise for the lessons, which contribute to their enjoyment. Their subject knowledge is good and they present a good model of spoken language, so that students develop accurate pronunciation.
- Lessons are planned with a logical sequence of activities which ensure that all make at least satisfactory progress. Outcomes are identified for different levels of ability, but often all students undertake the same tasks, with the result that the most able are not fully supported to develop their fluency.
- Text is used well as a cue for speaking and writing. Reading is underused to develop intercultural understanding and little support is provided for reading for pleasure either through age-appropriate readers or through directed searches on the internet.
- Resources are good and contribute to students' enjoyment and engagement. Computers are used well by students to develop their acquisition of new vocabulary through games and exercises.
- Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities are provided for well and teaching assistants support them very effectively.
- Marking does not regularly provide students with feedback on how to improve their work.
- A clear system of summative assessment measures progress each year. Assessment outcomes are fed into short-term planning satisfactorily. Some good examples were observed in lessons of the checking of prior learning, followed by clear explanations to students of how current work would build on it.

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

The quality of the curriculum in languages is satisfactory.

- The curriculum satisfactorily meets the needs of students and they have the opportunity to study more than one language. Students with skills in other languages can gain qualifications in those languages.
- Opportunities for enrichment and enhancement are satisfactory overall, but with particular strengths coming through the specialism in performing arts. One striking example was the dual language production of a Lorca play, which was particularly well received by parents.
- Good use is made of trainee teachers to support the most able students with conversation practice.
- Classrooms are bright and welcoming and the seating arrangements support pair and group work well.

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

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

- Standards have been rising in languages and previous underachievement is disappearing. An above average number of students choose to study a language in Key Stage 4. Teachers work well together and there is much mutual support.
- You and the other leaders are clear about the strengths and areas for development.
- Regular meetings ensure that the department runs smoothly, but there is scope for sharing good practice more regularly.
- Monitoring activities are regular and draw on a range of evidence, including observations of teaching both formal and informal. Self-review focuses on outcomes, but development planning needs to look more carefully at how improvements to teaching will be systematically introduced and what methods will be used to judge their effectiveness.

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

- increasing the progress that all students, but especially the most able, make in lessons by:
  - raising teachers' expectations of students' use of the language being studied and increasing their own use to manage activities
  - devising challenging learning objectives which increase the most able students' opportunities to develop fluency in speaking
- ensuring that teachers consistently provide students with high-quality feedback on how to improve their work
- creating more opportunities for the good practice that exists within the department to be shared
- increasing opportunities for students to gain first-hand experience of the culture of the countries where the languages are spoken.

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**