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Mrs C Murray
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Murray

Ofsted 2010–11 subject survey inspection programme: modern languages

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and the assistance of the staff and pupils, during my visit on 31 March 2011 to look at work in modern languages.

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 three lessons in Key Stage 2 and of a performance of songs by one class in Key Stage 1.

Achievement in languages

- Pupils make increasingly rapid progress in French as they move through the school, so that by the time they reach Year 6 they have learnt a considerable amount of vocabulary and developed a very good level of skills in the time they have been formally learning French. They remember what they have learnt well and can use their knowledge to answer questions in the language, for example by giving the date or carrying out simple mental arithmetic.
- They know a large number of songs covering a range of different vocabulary. They sing them with enthusiasm and boundless confidence.
- Their pronunciation is very good, although they do not know the links between how a word is spelt and how it is pronounced.

- Younger pupils can write single words when copying from a model. Older pupils write full sentences and in some cases paragraphs, for example to describe their family.
- Pupils are highly motivated by the subject. They thoroughly enjoy learning French and see it as important and useful. They understand that it gives them an insight into the culture of different countries.

Quality of teaching in languages

- Teachers enjoy excellent relationships with their classes. They teach with great enthusiasm, which rubs off on the pupils who respond very well. Their behaviour is impeccable and they are all eager to contribute in class, for example by volunteering answers.
- Lessons have a good variety of activities to keep the pupils fully involved. Teachers use repetition, songs, mimes and games very effectively.
- The teachers' explanations of new words and the rules of grammar are clear and easily understood by all. Teachers make intelligent use of the interactive whiteboard to make the new learning interesting and accessible. Pupils in Year 6 said that they did not find the subject at all difficult because 'the teacher makes it easy'.
- In the very best lessons, the teacher performs very energetically, uses the foreign language for much of the time and gets the pupils to do the same. The pupils' prior learning is recapitulated and then built on as new work is introduced. The rapid pace of these lessons enables pupils to make outstanding progress.
- Assessment is used well to highlight the progress that pupils are making. Pupils are involved in assessing their own progress in each unit and this increases their confidence in their ability. Teachers provide helpful written reports to parents on pupils' progress in French. However, the school does not link its assessment to a formal framework such as National Curriculum levels, which reduces the reliability of its measures of progress.

Quality of the curriculum in languages

- The subject follows a comprehensive scheme of work, supported by an extensive range of resources, teaching ideas and lesson plans. Teachers are able to use this as a basis to ensure that pupils' learning develops progressively. For example, Year 6 pupils have recently combined their learning of colours, parts of the body, numbers, and verbs in the third person to create and describe a monster. The curriculum does not, however, give pupils an understanding of phonics in French.
- The subject fits neatly into the school's creative curriculum. Work on intercultural understanding in French resonates with the school's work on the European Day of Languages or on the Chinese New Year. Key Stage 1 pupils enjoy their introduction to the many languages of the world by learning songs in French, German and Italian. However, pupils do not have direct experience of the foreign culture through, for example, school

links or DVD materials to show them what life is like for young French-speaking people.

- Transition arrangements with the partner secondary school are weak, because the schools in the cluster have different attitudes and approaches to primary languages.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in languages

- The school has a strong commitment to teaching French. Leaders recognise the value of learning a modern language and appreciate its benefits to pupils.
- The subject leader is very well organised and provides valuable support for colleagues. She benefits from suitable professional development and has a good knowledge of current developments and interesting ideas for the future. Subject documentation is of high quality.
- The school has a well-considered action plan and an accurate knowledge of how well the subject is doing. There are firm plans to monitor and evaluate modern languages formally next year.
- Staff's skills and confidence have not been formally audited against the scheme that the school is using. Leaders have not finally decided which units are to be covered by which year group and how best to deploy staff.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- agreeing what each year group is to cover and deciding on the most effective way to deploy staff
- exploring ways of giving pupils more direct experience of young Francophones, for example through a school link or with DVD material.

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. A copy of this letter is also being sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

Derek Neil
Additional Inspector