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Mr J Hollywood
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Hollywood

Ofsted 2011–12 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 10 May 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 three lessons.

Achievement in ML

- Attainment in languages is satisfactory overall and learning and progress, as observed in lessons, were good. Pupils sustain concentration and effort, listen well to their teachers and enjoy learning languages.
- Pupils work cooperatively and with enthusiasm. They enjoy learning songs and rhymes that support their learning. They feel that learning a language is useful because it helps them to make friends and will improve their job opportunities in the future.
- Pupils speak with good accents when they have the opportunity to do so and listen attentively to their teachers. However, on the whole, language learning skills are as yet underdeveloped. French and Mandarin have only recently been introduced to the curriculum. As a result, pupils are not yet able to use the language they have learnt creatively and independently and opportunities are sometimes missed for pupils to speak individually or use the language when working with their peers.

Quality of teaching in ML

- Teachers use their good subject knowledge to plan lessons that effectively encourage the development of language skills. They communicate enthusiasm for the subject to pupils and have high expectations.
- Activities are provided to suit the needs and abilities of all pupils. Follow-up work with classroom teachers is delivered with commitment and interest, providing pupils with opportunities to consolidate their learning and practise skills. Learning support is highly effective and information and communication technology is used particularly well to bring other cultures into the world of the classroom.
- The imaginative use of resources helps to support language acquisition. For example, in a lesson observed, the French version of *The Hungry Caterpillar* was used highly effectively to reinforce pupils' knowledge of the days of the week and numbers.
- Assessment procedures are at early stages of development but questioning is used effectively in lessons to establish whether pupils have understood the work.

Quality of the curriculum in ML

- All pupils have the opportunity to learn a language for one hour each week. Links with a local specialist language college and the local authority have ensured provision by specialist language teachers leading to high-quality outcomes for pupils in terms of pronunciation and engagement.
- Schemes of work address all language skills and provide suggestions for activities to engage and challenge all pupils. The school's decision to study two languages, for two years each, may result in pupils not attaining the level of competence expected in the languages learnt. However, by adopting this curriculum model, the school aims to ensure that pupils benefit from understanding and appreciating cultural diversity through the study of both a European and an Asiatic language.
- Links with schools abroad are at early stages of development. The lack of formal assessment and opportunities to gain accreditation are at present impeding the school's ability to track the progress of individual pupils and thereby plan for progression.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in ML

- You have a clear vision for school improvement in this area of the curriculum. Your drive and determination since September 2010 have been evident in immediately implementing entitlement to languages for all pupils and latterly putting in post a subject coordinator.
- A shared consensus that the learning of languages is useful and enjoyable is communicated effectively to all members of the school community. You see language learning as an important feature in improving the self-esteem and social skills of pupils, in conjunction with promoting an appreciation of cultural diversity.

- The leadership of the subject is at the early stages of development. Procedures for monitoring the work of practitioners and the assessment of learners in a formal capacity are not yet sufficiently embedded to have had an impact on improving outcomes for pupils. Development planning at subject level lacks precision and insufficient opportunities have been provided for classroom teachers to improve their skills.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- increasing the opportunities in lessons for individual pupils to use the target language as a natural means of communication
- introducing formal assessment procedures and opportunities for accreditation so that pupils' progress can be monitored more effectively.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop ML 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

Joan Davis
Her Majesty's Inspector