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Mr M Lacey
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Lacey

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

- Pupils speak Spanish confidently in lessons. Their recall is good and, in the case of older pupils, this recall is of longer utterances. The quality of their pronunciation and intonation is high. Their listening skills are developing well but progress is sometimes constrained by the lack of the use of Spanish by teachers in the lessons. Pupils write with accuracy, and at some length, from Year 4 onwards. Pupils in Year 6 can write well from memory. They can use bilingual dictionaries to extend their writing but they do not yet make use of information and communication technology (ICT) for independent work.
- Pupils have a developing grammatical understanding and are already using terms such as 'connectives' and 'verbs' accurately.
- Pupils' intercultural understanding is strong. They show a good awareness of Spanish as a world language and can talk about differences and similarities between their cultures and that of Spain.

- Pupils enjoy learning Spanish. They like the active way they learn and they talk well about why it is important to learn a language. Several pupils said that they liked the challenge of learning another language.

Quality of teaching in ML

- Teachers show enthusiasm for Spanish and convey that well to the pupils. They use their good understanding of primary teaching to good effect, for example, in the use of talk partners and group work. They also use the learning objectives of the lessons well to help pupils see how they are progressing.
- Planning is good and care is taken to ensure that written tasks are well matched to pupils' needs. This is not as effective with listening tasks, which are often too open-ended.
- Teachers make good use of a range of paper and technological resources. They make particularly good use of the foreign language assistant who provides a clear model of Spanish for the pupils as well as a source of up-to-date knowledge about Spanish speaking countries.
- The amount of Spanish spoken in the lessons is variable. Some good examples were seen of the target language being used and supported well by gesture, but teachers are too often telling pupils in English, rather than showing them in Spanish, what to do.
- Teachers assess pupils well in lessons. Marking in books is good and teachers set challenges for pupils to improve their work. The formal recording of pupils' outcomes is not sufficiently detailed.

Quality of the curriculum in ML

- The schemes of work have been carefully planned. The subject leader has made good use of published schemes of work and has adapted them well to the needs of the school. The curriculum is regularly reviewed to evaluate whether it is meeting the developing needs of the pupils, and the school is aware of the need to build in progression as the language works its way up the school.
- Policies set out clearly the aims and objectives for the subject and support classroom practice well.
- The school curriculum has a strong international focus and Spanish has been well integrated into that approach.
- The curriculum is enhanced effectively by language days, developing links with Spain and by clubs.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in ML

- You show a real commitment to the subject. This is exemplified by the way that the development of Spanish is integrated into the school improvement plan. Documentation indicates a very clear rationale for learning Spanish.

- The quality of self-evaluation is high. It is detailed and accurate and sets a clear agenda for improvement.
- You have considered well the training needs of the staff and the subject leader and have made good use of a range of training and networking opportunities at a regional and national level.
- You have raised the profile of the language well across the school by introducing Spanish in Key Stage 1 and by holding a workshop for parents.
- There is a strong commitment to staffing the subject. The use of a foreign language assistant for the last two years has had a positive impact on staff confidence and on pupils' pronunciation and interest in the subject.
- Links with the secondary schools are not well developed in the subject, although development work has started with one school in particular.
- Monitoring and evaluation of teachers' planning are good but observation of teaching is, at the moment, too informal.
- Entitlement to learn a language in Key Stage 2 is well met.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- planning for greater use of target language by teachers to provide more opportunities for listening
- ensuring that listening tasks are well matched to pupils' needs
- assessing progress more formally and monitoring which areas pupils are finding difficult
- monitoring and evaluating teaching more rigorously.

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

Anne Looney
Her Majesty's Inspector