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Mrs G Jones
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Jones

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 12 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 four lessons.

Achievement in ML

- Pupils achieve well in French across Key Stage 2, sometimes making exceptional progress given their starting points. They enjoy learning a foreign language and can give many and varied reasons for doing so. Pupils have confidence in their teachers and find lessons fun. They listen and respond well to their teachers. They are very willing to speak and their pronunciation is good. Pupils enjoy singing, saying rhymes and playing games in the language and feel that this helps them to learn.
- Pupils' listening skills are well developed but they do not routinely use the language to talk to their peers and opportunities are sometimes missed for pupils to engage in group work. They quickly learn new language and are able to recall previously acquired vocabulary and use it in new situations. They apply themselves well when presented with more challenging work and can manipulate rules of grammar in unfamiliar contexts.

- Pupils can read and write words and short sentences; however, literacy skills are underdeveloped in older pupils as they rarely have the opportunity to read and write extended texts independently.

Quality of teaching in ML

- Teachers communicate high expectations, enthusiasm and passion for languages to pupils. Carefully planned, imaginative and sometimes ingenious activities guide and support pupils to communicate willingly in the target language. Teachers have a strong understanding of what constitutes effective language learning. Pupils feel included and like the fact that, as they say, 'everyone gets a go!'
- Resources help to make lessons interesting to pupils and information and communication technology is used highly effectively, for example to show that French children play similar games to English children or to play music from French-speaking African countries.
- Support from learning assistants and classroom teachers is highly effective and they show an interest in learning a language themselves. This ensures that all pupils, of whatever ability, can participate in and enjoy language lessons.
- Assessment and marking are carried out for all four skills. However, procedures for formal assessment and accreditation are at early stages of development.

Quality of the curriculum in ML

- The curriculum is broad and well informed by current initiatives in modern language teaching. Pupils say that their work in French helps them with their other subjects, for example numeracy. In a Year 4 lesson, pupils were adding and subtracting numbers and saying what they thought the answer was in French.
- The learning environment supports language development through classroom displays and by rooms and objects around the school being labelled in the foreign language. French is embedded in other areas of the curriculum. For example, pupils' painted pictures, based on the work of French artists, are displayed around the school.
- Special events showcase languages. For example, the school put on an 'All Day French Breakfast' event to which parents and the local community were invited. French food prepared by pupils was available and parents could play 'boules' and other French games.
- Pupils are aware that they can use the internet, dictionaries and reference books to help them learn more about French and they are keen to do so. Homework is used effectively to encourage pupils to research into the lives of French-speaking people, thereby encouraging intercultural understanding.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in ML

- Leadership at all levels shows a commitment to and enthusiasm for language learning. There is a shared vision for the development of the curriculum in this respect. The school believes strongly that the learning of a language helps children to refine transferable skills that are useful in their other subjects, as well as improving their self-confidence and broadening their horizons.
- Languages have a high profile in the school and considerable resources have been directed at developing this area of the curriculum.
- Self-evaluation is accurate and the school has a clear programme for further development of language learning. However, the formal monitoring of individual pupils' progress is at an initial stage of development and planning is not yet sufficiently linked to improved outcomes for pupils.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- creating more opportunities for pupils to improve their reading and writing skills in French as they move up through the school
- introducing formal procedures for assessment and accreditation in order that the school may better monitor progress and thereby further improve outcomes for pupils.

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