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Mr A Marsh
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Marsh

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 26 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 two lessons.

Achievement in ML

- Pupils show a genuine enthusiasm for French and are particularly good at speaking and writing. Older pupils are able to talk and write confidently about past events and younger pupils can write sentences about hobbies and to what extent they enjoy them.
- Reading and listening skills are also developed well through a wide range of authentic materials.
- Pupils make good use of a range of resources including the use of dictionaries and 'talk boards' where they can record themselves speaking in French and their peers can assess their performance.
- They demonstrate a good knowledge and understanding, not only of French culture, but also of a range of cultures from around the world.
- Pupils show a clear understanding of the benefits of speaking a modern language in securing future employment.

Quality of teaching in ML

- The specialist subject teacher sets high expectations and pupils respond accordingly.
- Strong subject knowledge inspires confidence among pupils and they enjoy the wide range of activities provided in lessons.
- Occasionally, opportunities are missed for maximising pupils' enthusiasm in lessons by providing them with activities which encourage them to work collaboratively and independently.
- The use of the target language, as stated in the ML policy, is currently limited to basic classroom instructions and requests.
- The effective deployment of teaching assistants enables pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities to access the lessons and make good progress.
- Assessment is conducted through the effective use of questioning and the teacher regularly checking for understanding in the lesson. All pupils are assessed at the end of the academic year and this identifies their level of attainment. Routine marking does not indicate attainment levels and little guidance is given to pupils on how to move up to the next level.

Quality of the curriculum in ML

- The curriculum time allocated to ML allows for all pupils in Key Stage 2 to enjoy 45 minutes of language learning each week. Additional time is provided through cross-curricular activities which are embedded in everyday school practice.
- The curriculum secures good progression and develops the skills of reading, listening, speaking and writing equally.
- Pupils appreciate the many opportunities to develop their awareness of different languages and cultures provided through language clubs and activities linked to International School status. Recent examples include celebrating the European Day of Languages, working with the French Puppet Theatre and a German-speaking parent reading fairytales to pupils in his mother tongue.
- Corridors and classrooms are adorned with creative displays which raise awareness of ML and the importance of developing intercultural understanding.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in ML

- Senior leaders demonstrate firm commitment to the development of ML and offer good support to the specialist subject leader.
- The subject leader has a clear vision for the development of ML and is aware of current strengths and areas for development. Action planning reflects the key priorities to secure the continued success of the subject in the school.
- The school is managing the entitlement of Key Stage 2 provision well.

- The school is outward looking and has already achieved the intermediate award for International School status.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- steadily increasing the use of the target language in lessons as pupils progress through the school
- developing the use of assessment through the identification of attainment levels in the routine marking of work and indicating to pupils how they can move up to the next level
- creating more opportunities in lessons for pupils to work collaboratively and independently and empowering them to take responsibility for their learning.

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

John Daniell
Her Majesty's Inspector