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Mr E Brown
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Dear Mr Brown

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 21 June 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 are enthusiastic about learning French and speak the language with good pronunciation. They particularly enjoy active learning and are keen to practise new words through singing French songs.
- They develop an awareness of grammar and older pupils are able to produce single sentences in which they express their likes and dislikes and offer opinions. Year 6 pupils have recently learnt about items of food and can say whether or not they eat healthily. There were few examples of extended pieces of writing.
- When the teacher structures the lesson well, pupils are able to respond well to questions put to them by the teacher or their peers.
- Pupils appreciated the recent 'French Day' arranged by the school and would welcome further opportunities to develop their intercultural awareness, including of countries where other modern languages are spoken.

- Discussions with pupils demonstrated a good awareness of the importance of learning a modern language and how this can help secure future employment.
- Pupils' achievement is aided through careful preparation of teaching materials and the effective deployment of classroom assistants.

Quality of teaching in ML

- The subject teacher delivers the majority of lessons with consolidation provided by the classroom teacher. Expectations are high and the teachers set high standards.
- Good subject knowledge and careful planning ensure that all four skills of listening, reading, writing and speaking are practised. The creative use of resources matches pupils' differing learning styles well and pupils particularly enjoy singing and dancing. Group and pair work is established practice.
- The emphasis on speaking in lower years establishes accurate pronunciation which further improves as they progress through the school.
- The appropriate use of the target language in lessons develops pupils' listening skills and they are confident in understanding basic classroom instructions at an early age.
- The use of an outside speaker, who led activities during the recent 'French Day', increased pupils' awareness of French culture and tradition and they could cite interesting facts and figures in discussion.
- Assessment of pupils' work is now established in Year 3 but further up the school, procedures are less secure. Marking of work is regular but does not show them how to move up to the next level. Opportunities are also missed for pupils to assess each other's work on a regular basis.

Quality of the curriculum in ML

- The curriculum secures coverage of the four ML skills and draws also on commercial programmes. Schemes of work allow for progression, but there is scope for more rapid progression, particularly as teachers make more effective use of available assessment information.
- Curriculum time is generous, with pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 enjoying the same time allocation. Children in Reception also gain experience in ML.
- Classrooms and corridors are adorned with displays promoting ML. Key words and phrases in classrooms support pupils in expressing themselves in the foreign language. The recent enrichment day enhanced the curriculum and presented pupils with opportunities to relate the language they learn to real-life situations.
- Although links with other agencies are at an early stage, the school is effectively liaising with the main secondary school where most pupils continue their studies, and Year 6 pupils are participating in a French project which will secure a smooth transition to secondary school.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in ML

- Senior leaders and the subject leader demonstrate a good level of understanding about language learning and the school's commitment to ML is reflected through every pupil in the school having some access to learning French.
- The subject leader secures up-to-date training for those involved in teaching French and welcomes support offered from the local authority and The Harwich School, a local specialist language college.
- Senior leaders regularly assess the profile of ML in all areas of the school, and the well-written ML development plan is reviewed on a regular basis. The subject leader, although delivering the majority of the teaching, does not currently observe other teachers during the 15-minute consolidation sessions.
- The subject leader effectively gathers views of pupils and has also conducted a skills audit of teachers to ensure that the provision continues to meet the needs of the pupils.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- implementing assessment procedures in Key Stage 2, which are currently being used in Key Stage 1
- setting up a system of lesson observations to monitor the quality of learning in the 15-minute sessions delivered by the class teachers
- building on the success of the 'French Day' to further develop the pupils' understanding of other cultures.

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