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Mrs A Jerrard  
Headteacher  
Ricards Lodge High School  
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Dear Mrs Jerrard

**Ofsted 2011–12 subject survey inspection programme: modern languages (ML)**

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and students, during my visit on 4 and 5 October 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 students; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of students' work; and observation of six lessons.

The overall effectiveness of ML is good.

**Achievement in ML**

Achievement in ML is good.

- Students' attainment is above average at Key Stages 3 and 4. Their rate of progress is slower during Year 7, but accelerates during the following two years and is good by the end of Year 9. British Asian students make particularly good progress. Substantial numbers of students study French, German or Spanish in Key Stage 4 and secure good outcomes.
- Students are committed to learning languages and speak the language with confidence. Pronunciation is generally good and students make effective use of grammatical concepts. All four skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking are equally well developed.
- Students make good use of resources, including dictionaries and information and communication technology. They are aware of the

advantages of learning a modern language and see this as a pathway to securing future employment. Students' knowledge and awareness of other cultures remain at an early stage of development.

- Students who study German in the sixth form are all from minority ethnic groups. They acquired German while residing in Germany. Achievement in German is good, although writing is the weakest of the four skills.

### **Quality of teaching in ML**

The quality of teaching in ML is satisfactory.

- The quality of teaching is satisfactory and improving rapidly. Recently appointed teachers demonstrate a commitment to the department's methodology. Many examples of good teaching were observed. In the increasing proportion of good or better lessons, teachers make good use of information on individual students' prior performance and specific needs to plan lessons which allow them to make good progress.
- Students are offered opportunities to work independently and collaboratively. They assess each other's performance, and their own, with confidence.
- Teachers use the language being studied in every lesson, but the extent of its usage is variable. Opportunities are sometimes missed to develop students' listening skills by immersing them in the language.
- Books are marked regularly and formal assessments in all four skills inform teachers' planning and allow them to set challenging targets for students. Teachers' comments in books are supportive, but do not always indicate clearly enough what students should do to move up to the next level.

### **Quality of the curriculum in ML**

The quality of the curriculum in ML is good.

- A recent review of the curriculum has introduced setting by ability in Year 7. At the same time, more able students in Year 7 appreciate the opportunity to study two modern languages.
- The school has actively promoted the English Baccalaureate and, as a result, the uptake for ML has increased in Year 10. Students who speak a heritage language are encouraged to gain appropriate accreditation and are supported by the department with their preparation for the examination.
- Schemes of work offer clear guidance to teachers and identify opportunities to enhance provision through the use of information and communication technology and cross-curricular links.
- The school offers many opportunities through the curriculum to develop intercultural understanding including through links with the Swiss embassy, a cross-curricular fine art excursion to Paris and a drama project with a French school.

## **Effectiveness of leadership and management in ML**

The effectiveness of leadership and management in ML is good.

- Strong leadership at senior level through regular and rigorous monitoring of the department's performance, including the observation of lessons, is securing improvement in ML. The department piloted a new style internal review in May 2011. The head of department, with support from her line manager, has produced an accurate self-evaluation document and department improvement plan, based on the new Ofsted inspection framework which comes into effect from January 2012.
- The department management structure of one head of department and a second in charge is currently meeting the need to secure good student outcomes.
- The department has established good links with local primary schools and hosts a successful primary languages day, where pupils experience taster sessions in many languages, including Japanese. The head of department also hosts secondary school network meetings and delivers training in ML to secondary teachers.
- Analyses of performance by different student groups, although conducted regularly, are currently not adequately informed because of the way in which information on learning and progress is recorded on the department's lesson observation forms.

### **Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:**

- accelerating the rate of progress for students in Year 7
- sharpening the focus on the progress made by different groups when planning for learning and when conducting lesson observations
- providing clearer guidelines to students on their next steps, when marking their work and maximising the use of the target language in lessons
- increasing the number of students choosing to study a ML in the sixth form and reviewing the management structure to meet the increased demands.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop ML in the school.

As 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. A copy of this letter is also being sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

**John Daniell**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**