

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 0300 123 1231
F 020 7421 6855
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



13 October 2011

Ms F Neligan
Headteacher
Notre Dame Catholic Primary School
169 Eglinton Road
London
SE18 3SJ

Dear Ms Neligan

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 4 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 pupils; scrutiny of relevant documentation; and observation of three lessons.

The overall effectiveness of ML is satisfactory.

Achievement in ML

Achievement in ML is satisfactory.

- Pupils enjoy language lessons and participate well in activities. Their listening and reading skills are developing satisfactorily. They are able to imitate accurately the language presented by their teachers and are starting to understand how sounds and spellings are linked.
- The groups who currently have, and have had in the past, regular lessons in French are making satisfactory progress. In some year groups, progress has been slowed by significant staffing difficulties.
- Writing is the weakest skill and pupils have limited opportunities to use French creatively, even the most able or those who are native speakers.
- Pupils have limited awareness of the culture of the countries where French is spoken. They have a satisfactory understanding of the usefulness of

learning additional languages and a positive attitude to the numerous languages spoken in the school.

Quality of teaching in ML

The quality of teaching in ML is satisfactory.

- Teachers understand how to present new language to pupils in interesting ways and how to plan lessons with a logical sequence of activities to meet the learning objectives. They make good use of songs and games which add greatly to pupils' enjoyment. Good resources bring lessons alive and contribute to the pupils' good enjoyment.
- Other adults in the classroom support the learning of all pupils well. They are attentive to all the pupils' needs and help to keep them all on task. Where their own competence in French is weaker, training is being provided to help them to support more precisely.
- Teachers make some use of French to manage activities in the lesson. However, little use is made of modelling to reduce the need for explanations in English. This hinders pupils' development of language learning strategies such as inference and the identification of cognates.
- Lesson plans offer some indication of where the more able pupils and those who already speak French will be extended and where additional support will be given.
- Formal assessment does not yet take place. In lessons, assessment is also relatively weak. This is particularly the case in repetition exercises, where not enough care is taken to gauge accurately when pupils have mastered the language being rehearsed. As a result, the least confident are required to move too quickly to using the language independently.

Quality of the curriculum in ML

The quality of the curriculum in ML is satisfactory.

- The curriculum in French is becoming more coherent after the frequent changes in staffing in the last few years. All pupils in Key Stage 2 have a dedicated session of French each week and pupils in Year 3 are prepared for their future studies with sessions that introduce them to the culture of the countries where French is spoken and to some simple language.
- Displays in classrooms support pupils' recall of language and structures well. Heritage languages are celebrated with some special events, but opportunities are missed to celebrate the wealth of languages spoken by pupils or to promote intercultural understanding with displays around the school. Opportunities are limited for pupils to conduct research using information and communication technology and the school has limited links with schools in France or other French speaking countries.
- The commercially produced course which the school follows ensures that the requirements of the National Curriculum are covered. However, the schemes of work are not sufficiently adapted to the particular needs and context of the school and its pupils. As a result, the expectations for the

progress that different groups of pupils will make as they move through the school are not clear.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in ML

The effectiveness of leadership and management in ML is satisfactory.

- A new leadership structure for ML has increased the capacity to develop and embed the good work that has gone on in the past. However, monitoring in ML has not yet taken place, as the subject leader is new to the role.
- Access to professional development is satisfactory and teachers share ideas well.
- Improvement plans have appropriate timescales for the priorities which reflect the most important development aspects for the subject.
- Accommodation and resources for languages are satisfactory. However, more use could be made of technology to differentiate and to support the development of intercultural understanding and provide links with native speakers of French.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring that all planning takes account of individual needs and builds on pupils' prior learning
- building greater opportunities to celebrate languages and to support pupils' intercultural understanding through displays around the school
- ensuring that teachers check regularly that pupils are all confident to use the new language productively before requiring them to do so.

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

Elaine Taylor
Her Majesty's Inspector