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Mr T Carroll
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Carroll

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 17 and 18 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 eight lessons.

The overall effectiveness of ML is good.

Achievement in ML

Achievement in ML is good.

- Students join the school in Year 9 and are taught in mixed-ability classes. , As soon as the school has established their levels of attainment, students' progress accelerates. In Key Stage 4, they make good and sometimes outstanding progress in French. Those gaining a GCSE in German currently make only satisfactory progress, as they have had only three years to follow the course. The school has addressed this by changing its Year 9 curriculum to allow accelerated progress for more able students. Students enjoy learning languages and many demonstrate their commitment in Key Stage 4, by attending GCSE classes in French and German which take place before the start of the school day.
- Students communicate well in the ML and pronunciation is largely accurate. They are expected to use the language being taught to make

basic requests, but make less use of this when talking to each other informally. Reading skills are well developed and students are actively encouraged to use new vocabulary, acquired through reading texts in the ML, when producing extended pieces of writing. They are exposed to the ML regularly in lessons and identify key information well when listening for gist.

- The school recognises the importance of developing students' intercultural understanding, particularly as the vast majority are of White British heritage. Students interviewed demonstrated a strong awareness of the culture of countries where French and German are spoken, as well as other cultures. Those students who choose to continue with the subject have a good understanding of the usefulness of ML and identify it as a key tool to securing employment within a global economy.
- Achievement in the sixth form is good. Students are able to study ML even when uptake is low and they make good progress.

Quality of teaching in ML

The quality of teaching in ML is good.

- Much teaching is good and better and the common strengths shared across both languages include strong subject knowledge, positive relationships, high expectations and good lesson planning. Teachers make effective use of student assessment data to plan activities which meet the needs of different groups of students. Additional resources including dictionaries and the use of information and communication technology (ICT), support students well to achieve their targets.
- Teachers make appropriate use of the language being taught to sustain students' engagement in the lesson.
- The quality of marking is strong in both subjects, because it is informative and makes clear to students at what level they are working and how they can progress. Consequently, students are confident in identifying their areas for development and are motivated to succeed.
- Occasionally, teachers do not leave sufficient time at the end of the lesson to check to what extent students have achieved the learning outcomes.

Quality of the curriculum in ML

The quality of the curriculum in ML is good.

- The well-designed curriculum has been modified to allow for the introduction of a second ML in Year 9. A majority of students choose to continue with at least one ML at Key Stage 4 and the flexibility provided by the early morning classes provides the opportunity for some to study both French and German.
- Schemes of work are well written and identify opportunities for the use of ICT and for working with other subject areas.

- Enrichment activities, enhanced through the school's International School Award, provide many opportunities for students to travel abroad and to host foreign visitors in school. Current international work includes links with Sweden, Senegal, South Africa and the USA.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in ML

The effectiveness of leadership and management in ML is good.

- You and the other leaders promote the importance of learning a ML and this has had a positive impact on uptake at Key Stage 4. Self-evaluation processes are accurate and correctly identify key issues to secure improvement in the subject. For example, more active learning sessions have been included in lessons to meet the needs of some boys.
- Partnership work is good both within the school and with external partners.
- The department is well resourced and the accommodation is good. ML classrooms provide a pleasant learning environment which celebrates students' achievements.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- making more effective use of time at the end of lessons to allow teachers to measure students' progress against the learning outcomes
- monitoring closely the provision of German and the impact of recent initiatives to secure parity between the two languages.

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