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Miss J Evans
Headteacher
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Dear Miss Evans

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 2 November 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 four lessons.

The overall effectiveness of ML is satisfactory.

Achievement in ML

Achievement in ML is satisfactory.

- Pupils enjoy learning ML and are able to identify the advantages of being able to speak another language, for example when travelling abroad either on holiday or business.
- All pupils learn French for the first two years and then move on to Spanish which results in slower rates of progress. They speak the ML with reasonably accurate pronunciation and respond well to reading tasks, when the work is carefully structured. Opportunities to write in the ML are limited, and some pupils lack the confidence to express themselves in written form.
- Pupils can identify some common sounds in the ML and use these to write down individual words.

- A very few pupils are able to provide information on the cultures of the countries where the language is spoken.

Quality of teaching in ML

The quality of teaching in ML is satisfactory.

- Teachers' subject knowledge is limited as they are not specialists; however, they make every effort to share good practice. Opportunities are missed in lessons to use the language being taught, and dependence on English is too great when giving basic instructions.
- Marking of pupils' work is regular, and supportive comments are added in the ML. Teachers do not yet provide pupils with comments on their next steps and information gained from assessments is not fully maximised to accelerate progress.
- Most lessons are planned to allow for the differing needs of pupils, and satisfactory use is made of additional resources including DVDs, dictionaries and information and communication technology. However, pupils are offered too few opportunities to develop their writing in the ML.

Quality of the curriculum in ML

The quality of the curriculum in ML is satisfactory.

- The curriculum is designed to allow all pupils to gain experience in two languages in Key Stage 2. Until very recently, this has limited pupils' progress in developing their ML skills, however, schemes of work have been rewritten to secure better progression.
- Classrooms are spacious and well equipped. Displays for ML are colourful and pupils make effective use of these when searching for previously learnt vocabulary or phrases to respond to teachers' questions.
- The few pupils who already have a competence in a language are effectively used as classroom assistants, which develops their confidence and self-esteem.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in ML

The effectiveness of leadership and management in ML is satisfactory.

- The profile of ML in the school has started to be raised, following a period where the emphasis had been on raising standards in reading, writing and numeracy. ML features in the school improvement plan, along with other foundation subjects, with a focus on developing progression in the four ML skills.
- The recently appointed ML coordinator monitors ML provision through conducting a 'school walk' twice a year, during which she visits lessons and interviews teachers. These monitoring procedures successfully identified a need to develop resources and to acquire further training, which is currently underway.

- The lack of any formal assessment systems and the consequential slower rate of progress has been addressed through the piloting of the Languages Ladder scheme with selected classes, which informs pupils of the level at which they are working in any of the four ML skills.
- Self-evaluation documentation is accurate and planning for improvement has satisfactorily identified key issues to improve standards.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- monitoring the revised schemes of work to identify any impact on accelerating pupils' progress across all four skills, but especially in writing
- making smarter use of formal assessments to secure accelerated progress and providing pupils with clearer feedback about their level of attainment and how they can move up to the next level
- providing pupils with greater exposure to the language being taught by using it when giving basic instructions and offering more opportunities to develop a better understanding of the cultures of the countries where the ML is spoken.

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