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Mrs M Robson  
Headteacher  
Sackville School  
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Dear Mrs Robson

### **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 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 students; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of students' work; and observation of nine lessons.

The overall effectiveness of ML is outstanding.

### **Achievement in ML**

Achievement in ML is good.

- Students make good progress by the end of Key Stage 3, where many follow a fast track route to secure a GCSE grade by the end of Year 9. Attainment is above average at GCSE but the proportion of students gaining the top grades in French is below the national average. Students achieve particularly well in National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) which are linked to business studies.
- Students are enthusiastic about learning languages and understand how speaking a language can improve one's employability. They demonstrate a good understanding of the cultures where the ML is spoken.
- All four skills are equally well developed and students' acquisition of grammar is good. They produce extended pieces of writing in the ML

which is often creative. They work well independently and collaboratively and make effective use of the ML when communicating with one another.

- Sixth form group sizes are small which makes comparison of students' academic performance with national statistics unreliable. However, those who study ML have high aspirations and are supported well to achieve their goals.

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

The quality of teaching in ML is good.

- Teachers have high expectations and teaching engages and enthuses students. In the best lessons, teachers plan to meet the needs of different groups of students and empower them to take responsibility for their own learning.
- Teachers make effective use of the language being taught in the lesson, while checking regularly that all students have understood what is being taught.
- Resources are used well to develop all four ML skills and good use is made of additional adults, including foreign language assistants who facilitate the learning in class or lead on conversation sessions with smaller groups.
- Assessment is a strong feature of teaching. Books are marked regularly and detailed comments from teachers support students well in moving up to the next level.

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

The quality of the curriculum in ML is outstanding.

- The imaginative and flexible curriculum is skilfully designed to meet the needs of all students. Students have a choice of a fast track or a traditional route to GCSE, as well as a choice of accreditation including NVQ. There are ample opportunities to gain qualifications in two languages and this is actively encouraged.
- Schemes of work enhance the curriculum through their detailed links with information and communication technology and the many opportunities for assessment.
- A highly effective aspect of the curriculum is the range of opportunities offered to students, including learning activities in France, Germany and Spain, and many students choose to participate. Holding the International School Award enhances the provision and the school has hosted ML theatre workshops for students in Year 9, as well as arranging work experience abroad for students in the sixth form.

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

The effectiveness of leadership and management in ML is outstanding.

- ML enjoys a high profile in the school and leaders and managers have eradicated students' previously negative attitudes to ML by making the judicious decision to introduce the fast track to GCSE by the end of Year 9. Senior leaders demonstrate their commitment to ML by providing a choice of pathways and accreditations and by sanctioning sixth form groups with small numbers of students. Senior leaders have enhanced the faculty's capacity by financing a Spanish language course for five members of staff.
- Monitoring processes are strong. Self-evaluation documentation is accurate, informs school improvement effectively and demonstrates the capacity to sustain improvement. The head of faculty's vision for ML is shared by his team and is evident through the teaching. The faculty responds well to issues arising from whole-school analyses of student performance data.

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

- reducing dependence on whole-school data and developing systems within the faculty which analyse in depth the performance of different groups of students, with a view to further accelerating progress of students following the fast-track route to GCSE to achieve the top grades, especially in French.

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**