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Mr S Viles
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Viles

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 16 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 good.

Achievement in ML

Achievement in ML is good.

- Pupils achieve well in French across Key Stage 2 and enjoy their language lessons. One pupil commented, 'It's fun! I just love everything about French!' Pupils understand the value of learning a foreign language and can give a variety of reasons for doing so.
- Pupils are very willing to speak and their pronunciation is accurate. They enjoy singing and playing games in the language and feel that this helps them to learn.
- Pupils listen well to their teachers and to each other. They work well in groups and independently. The use of French as the natural means of communication in the classroom by pupils is underdeveloped.

- Pupils can read and write words and short sentences. However, literacy skills are underdeveloped in older pupils as they rarely have the opportunity to read and write extended texts independently.

Quality of teaching in ML

The quality of teaching in ML is good.

- Teachers communicate high expectations and enthusiasm for languages. Carefully planned, imaginative activities engage pupils and are matched well to suit the needs and abilities of individuals. For example, in one Year 3 lesson, pupils could deepen their knowledge of French words for colours by working individually on computers, playing bingo or colouring in masks, which they could then take home. Pupils were so absorbed in these activities that they were very reluctant to stop working when the lesson came to an end.
- Support from learning assistants is integrated well in lesson planning and is therefore highly effective. This ensures that all pupils, of whatever ability, can enjoy their lessons and make good progress.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and a strong understanding of what constitutes effective language learning. They use information and communication technology highly effectively to support and challenge pupils.
- Assessment records are kept, but these only record pupils' progress in speaking and listening. The school recognises that this is an area for development.

Quality of the curriculum in ML

The quality of the curriculum in ML is good.

- The school's curriculum is delivered through topics and the learning of a foreign language is firmly embedded within the wider curriculum. The scheme of work for languages now addresses progression in all skills, although in the past the focus on the development of reading and writing was insufficient.
- The learning environment supports language development well and many displays around the school promote French and celebrate aspects of French culture. Pupils also learn about other countries where French is spoken.
- Special events, such as the very popular multi-cultural weeks, showcase languages and embrace diversity. The school also has a 'language of the month' which gives pupils who speak languages other than English an opportunity to teach their teachers and their peers.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in ML

The effectiveness of leadership and management in ML is good.

- Leadership at all levels shows a commitment to and passion for language learning. The school believes strongly that language learning contributes well to pupils' broader educational, social and cultural development.
- Languages have a high profile in the school and considerable resources have been directed at this area of the curriculum.
- The recently appointed subject leader has a very clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of provision and has rapidly identified areas for development. Plans for improvement are clearly focused on improving outcomes for pupils.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- developing, promoting and embedding the use of the foreign language as the normal means of communication in the classroom
- providing more opportunities for pupils to improve their reading and writing skills as they move through the school
- establishing formal assessment procedures in all skills and ensuring that pupils receive clear information on how to improve their knowledge and use of the foreign language.

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

Joan Davis
Her Majesty's Inspector