

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

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



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Mr M Ferguson
Headteacher
Brooke Voluntary Controlled Church of England Primary School
High Green
Brooke
Norwich
NR15 1HP

Dear Mr Ferguson

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 1 December 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 two lessons.

The overall effectiveness of ML is good.

Achievement in ML

Achievement in ML is good.

- All groups of pupils make good progress in each of the two languages that they study. They enjoy language learning and most are confident speakers with good intonation and pronunciation.
- They are starting to understand grammatical conventions that are different from English and older, more able pupils are able to make comparisons with the other foreign language they have studied.
- By the end of the two years learning each language, many pupils are able to write short paragraphs and they use languages creatively through imaginative opportunities including storybook work using information and communication technology.

- They have a good understanding of the culture of countries where the languages are spoken and a good awareness of the usefulness of ML.

Quality of teaching in ML

The quality of teaching in ML is good.

- Teachers obviously enjoy ML teaching and convey that to pupils. The support provided by the commercial courses used, together with the good training they have received, secures their confidence.
- They use the language being studied appropriately in lessons. Routines such as giving praise and greetings are consistently delivered in the language being studied and teachers model what they want rather than explain, to limit the need for English translations.
- Imaginative and well-planned activities ensure that lessons are interesting, fun and well-paced. Occasionally, the pace of learning drops for some pupils when all are repeating new words. Teachers use a limited range of strategies to ensure that all have had sufficient time to repeat new language items before being required to use them productively.
- Lesson plans indicate suitable learning objectives for different levels of ability. Pupils who are more able contribute well as leaders in group work, while less able pupils are supported well by teaching assistants in some classes.
- Teachers ensure that the introduction of a written version of new language is carefully timed and, as a result, pupils develop a good understanding of sound-spelling links which in turn helps them to read aloud accurately.
- Assessment is starting to be developed, but the school does not yet use assessment outcomes to evaluate the quality of provision.

Quality of the curriculum in ML

The quality of the curriculum in ML is good.

- The small size of the school and the changing numbers in different age groups has been carefully considered when deciding on the pattern of provision for ML. As a result, the chosen model suits the school's context exceptionally well. Issues of continuity and progression have been successfully addressed and outcomes are good.
- Sufficient time is provided within the curriculum and teachers use the time flexibly to enhance the opportunities for cross-curricular reinforcement.
- Schemes of work are clear, specifically with regard to progression, and are based on commercial packages which include recordings of native speakers. The policy for ML is clear, but references to teaching and learning are not specific to the subject, for example the school's expectations of the use of the language being studied by teachers to manage lessons.

- Pupils are provided with first-hand experience of different cultures through visitors to the school and through enrichment activities.
- The learning environment supports pupils' development well in classrooms.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in ML

The effectiveness of leadership and management in ML is good.

- All teachers have been trained well to deliver ML and you and the subject leader are well-informed about ML issues.
- The school has a very sound rationale for the pattern of provision and development planning outlines well both present and future practice, but the focus on improving the quality of teaching is weaker.
- Monitoring and self-evaluation are based on a limited range of evidence but lead to accurate judgements of the quality. The small size of the school limits opportunities for lesson observations by the subject leader or peer observations to develop particular aspects of teaching.
- Good links with secondary schools through cluster meetings ensure that the school prepares pupils well for the next stage of their education.
- Pupils in Key Stage 2 receive their full entitlement to ML provision, supported by well-designed preparatory work in younger classes.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- employing a wider range of strategies to check that all pupils are ready to move to using new language items independently with confidence
- widening the strategies used to gather evidence for self-evaluation, so that development planning can focus more directly on the quality of teaching.

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