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Mr D May  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr May

**Ofsted 2011–12 subject survey inspection programme: modern languages (ML)**

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 1 March 2012 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 three lessons and a story-telling session.

The overall effectiveness of ML is good.

**Achievement in ML**

Achievement in ML is good.

- Pupils make good progress. They are able to have conversations, asking and answering questions about themselves with good fluency. They greet visitors spontaneously in French and are keen to show what they can do. They listen to a variety of spoken French, including songs and native speakers on DVDs, imitating pronunciation well. They develop an ability to use a range of skills to make sure they understand, such as using the context and visual clues. Reading and writing develop more gradually; pupils label items accurately and are able to copy short phrases, but rarely write at length or from memory.
- Pupils' infectious enthusiasm encourages their teachers to teach them regularly throughout the week. They say they would like even more language work and to learn more languages. They know that learning a

language will be useful for them in the future and particularly look forward to the prospect of going to France with the local secondary school when they are in Year 7. Pupils have a good understanding of the similarities and differences between different cultures and are quick to point out when something might be described as stereotyping, for example they know that not everyone in France eats snails.

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

The quality of teaching in ML is good.

- Teachers have high expectations of pupils' spoken language and provide a good model for pupils to copy. Many teachers have had training in school from a former primary languages specialist and have a good range of techniques to keep pupils interested and involved. Pupils are very keen on the games and other activities which they say help them to learn, saying 'it's not just teaching, it's fun, so we learn and understand'. They get plenty of opportunities to practise in groups and pairs, often being asked to roam around the class asking as many questions and giving as many answers as they can. Pupils summarised this, saying the teacher 'lets you express yourself and say quite a lot'.
- Reading resources are, however, less well used. Pupils have access to several library books in French, but reading is not often a planned part of classroom activity. Pupils are not systematically taught sound-spelling links and so make pronunciation errors when reading aloud in French. Information and communication technology is used well by teachers in classrooms, but opportunities for pupils to use computers are not as well developed.
- Teachers know their pupils well and plan activities that they enjoy and which challenge them. Pupils particularly enjoy the fact that 'every lesson we learn something different' and say that French is 'hard but fun'.

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

The quality of the curriculum in ML is satisfactory.

- Languages are being taught in most year groups, although most of the teaching happens from Year 3 onwards when pupils have about 45 minutes per week. The school has a policy of focussing on the teaching of oral skills and developing cultural understanding and this is a strength. Fewer opportunities are provided for developing reading and writing. Pupils develop a good understanding of the local Cornish culture, reading stories and learning some of the language. They also learn what life is like in China. Some pupils have been on trips organised by the school to Brittany, where they learnt a lot about a French town and its traditions. The well-planned transition project for moving from Year 6 to Year 7, which includes a trip to France, is very motivating for pupils.
- The scheme of work for French suggests resources which are well chosen, interesting and give a flavour of France, but the planning does not explicitly state what progress pupils will make. It is also inconsistently

used. Not all teachers incorporate elements into lessons, such as ways of recording pupils' progress. The teaching of French tends to be done in discrete sessions and there are only occasional links made with other subjects, such as music.

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

The effectiveness of leadership and management in ML is satisfactory.

- The school has not had a subject coordinator for some time and languages have not been a priority in terms of developing the subject, although leaders have a satisfactory understanding of where the strengths and areas for development lie. Good use is made of a specialist from the local secondary school to teach Years 5 and 6, and classroom teachers for other year groups ensure that pupils are well taught. Nevertheless, the school needs to improve subject planning so that it incorporates progression, especially in reading and writing, and to share what is already good among all the teachers.

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

- ensuring that the subject is well coordinated and includes more opportunities to develop reading and writing by exploiting links with other subject areas
- updating the schemes of work to reflect the progression between year groups and encouraging pupils to keep records of what they have achieved.

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.

Yours sincerely

**Joanna Peach**  
**Additional Inspector**