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Miss D Thompson
Headteacher
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Dear Miss Thompson

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 8 March 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, including those pupils who are members of the French club; 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 French and speak enthusiastically about the range of activities in lessons. The emphasis on the spoken language at the start of Key Stage 2 helps to build up their confidence, although pronunciation is not always accurate. Teachers were observed in lessons working effectively with pupils on developing sound-spelling links. Pupils sustain their levels of concentration reasonably well when listening to shorter extracts of the spoken language.
- Pupils are largely dependent on the teacher to secure progress and are given fewer opportunities to work independently. However, some effective work was observed where they worked in pairs and in groups. Older pupils

are able to write short sentences in French, but few examples of extended writing were to be found.

- Pupils are aware of the advantages of learning a language for their future economic wellbeing and some could speak about the cultures of the countries where French is spoken.

Quality of teaching in ML

The quality of teaching in ML is satisfactory.

- Teachers are non-specialists but they nevertheless communicate enthusiasm for the subject. New language is often presented imaginatively through the use of information and communication technology (ICT), French songs and reading books.
- Teachers plan their lessons so that all skills are covered equally. Where learning is better, teachers plan activities which match the needs of different groups of pupils. Most lessons, however, have the same content for everyone in the class.
- Teachers' use of French in the classroom is restricted to language related to the topic being taught. They do not all yet make full use of French when giving basic instructions to pupils and the quality of teachers' pronunciation is inconsistent.
- Marking is regular and teachers are provided with a guide to assessment opportunities. Teachers comment on positive aspects on pupils' work and tell them how to improve. They check that pupils understand through satisfactory use of questioning, but do not specifically refer to levels of attainment. Pupils are provided with few opportunities to assess their own work and that of their classmates.

Quality of the curriculum in ML

The quality of the curriculum in ML is satisfactory.

- The curriculum provides an opportunity for all pupils in Years 3 to 6 to be exposed to French for around 30 to 45 minutes each week. Year 6 have only just resumed their study of French, as school leaders had been focusing their efforts on raising levels of literacy and numeracy.
- Pupils follow a commercial programme of study which is supplemented by additional materials, including ICT and dictionaries. Schemes of work are clear and indicate how pupils will progress and develop their skills in writing, listening, speaking and reading.
- Opportunities exist for pupils to develop their understanding of other countries and cultures through activities, including the 'World Café' project. Pupils learn about other countries in the world and make presentations to parents and carers, as well as sampling the country's food. Members of the French club greeted the inspector in French and presented him with a lunch menu they had translated from English. The school is also working towards gaining the International School Award.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in ML

The effectiveness of leadership and management in ML is satisfactory.

- The teaching of French is currently overseen by three members of staff as a satisfactory interim arrangement. Plans are in place to appoint a single post holder with responsibility for French from September 2012.
- School-improvement planning documentation makes reference to the provision of French, but opportunities are missed to identify a clear strategic direction for the subject with a view to improving pupil outcomes.
- The non-specialist teachers are provided with schemes of work and a good range of resources. However, they have not benefited from any recent training. Pupils' attitudes towards French are positive and French is gaining a higher profile in the school.
- Displays in classrooms and in the corridors are imaginative and colourful and serve to deepen pupils' understanding of France and French-speaking countries, as well as their understanding of other countries and cultures.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- providing more opportunities for pupils to assess their own work and that of their peers
- reviewing subject-improvement planning documentation to include measurable pupil outcomes
- providing training sessions for teachers of French in order to develop their confidence in speaking more French in the classroom and with a greater degree of accuracy.

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