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Miss L McLanachan
Headteacher
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Dear Miss McLanachan

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 7 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 lessons.

The overall effectiveness of ML is satisfactory.

Achievement in ML

Achievement in ML is satisfactory.

- Pupils enjoy learning a new language and are keen to talk about what they have learnt.
- It is difficult to assess attainment, as the teaching of a modern language across Key Stage 2 was only introduced at the beginning of last term. However, lesson observation plus information from interim assessment indicate that most pupils are making satisfactory progress.
- The focus in lessons is on developing listening and speaking skills, and pupils enjoy learning songs and rhymes. However, few references to sound-spelling links or to language-learning strategies were observed.

- The diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds of pupils have helped them to appreciate the advantages of learning languages; they readily expressed good reasons why it is useful to learn another language.

Quality of teaching in ML

The quality of teaching in ML is satisfactory.

- The ML teacher is new to the role this year, but has embraced the challenge of introducing the subject; she clearly communicates to pupils her commitment and enthusiasm.
- As the language being taught is also new to the teacher, she is using her prior knowledge of learning other languages, plus internet resources, to develop her subject knowledge. She is beginning to use the language for praise and instructions, but currently employs a limited range of strategies to avoid too much use of English.
- The teacher draws sensibly on commercial courses and some technology is used in lessons, for example, the interactive whiteboard is used to present, listen to, and practise new language.
- Ongoing formative assessment takes place in lessons and the teacher has begun to use the 'Languages Ladder' for summative assessment.
- The teacher's lack of any training to teach modern languages has limited her understanding of the subject pedagogy. She has used her previous teaching experience, which included training to support pupils whose first language is not English, to enable pupils to make a satisfactory start in their learning of the new language.

Quality of the curriculum in ML

The quality of the curriculum in ML is satisfactory.

- The curriculum model meets entitlement. It relates to the Key Stage 2 framework and time allocation is satisfactory, although no opportunities are provided to reinforce the learning between the weekly sessions.
- A commercial scheme of work has been used and adapted to meet the needs of the pupils in the school. The scheme does not highlight progressively difficult learning objectives for units of work, or appropriate learning objectives within lessons.
- The school's diverse community provides opportunities for teachers to enable pupils to appreciate different cultures and to be enthusiastic about learning languages. However, no displays were seen in corridors or classrooms in relation to learning languages, or to celebrate other cultures. Visitors from a range of cultures help pupils to understand and appreciate diversity and the school celebrates religious festivals, including Eid, Diwali and the Chinese New Year.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in ML

The effectiveness of leadership and management in ML is satisfactory.

- You and other senior leaders support language learning as a means to develop pupils' confidence and enjoyment in learning. The subject is not a priority for the school, although it has a commitment to ensuring pupils' entitlement. The pattern of future delivery is uncertain.
- Communication with, and support from, the ML departments at any of the six secondary schools which the school feeds is lacking. The school does not know which languages are offered to Year 7 pupils in those schools; information about pupils' language learning is currently not shared.
- The subject leader has demonstrated commitment and enthusiasm since taking up the post in September. As this is a new role and outside her previous subject expertise, her confidence in achieving the standards that she would like for pupils, is limited.
- Responsibilities for ML rest with one teacher, supported by you. She requires professional development, including the opportunity to observe others who are subject experts, in order to help her to develop her subject knowledge and subject pedagogy.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring that the subject leader receives appropriate training and professional development in subject knowledge enhancement and subject pedagogy in order to help pupils progress further
- sharing the professional development with class teachers to enable them to reinforce language learning between the weekly sessions
- increasing the profile of languages across the school, for example, in classrooms and through displays, special days or events to celebrate different languages
- developing links with local secondary schools, to allow access to support and to share information about pupils' language learning, especially as they move between Key Stages 2 and 3.

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

Jacqueline Hill
Additional Inspector