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21 March 2012

Mr T Molloy  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Molloy

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

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and students, during my visit on 6 and 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 students; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of students' work; and observation of eight lessons.

The overall effectiveness of ML is good.

**Achievement in ML**

Achievement in ML is good.

- Students enjoy learning languages and make good progress as they move through the school. Over time, the proportion of students gaining A\* to C grades at GCSE has exceeded the national average. Their commitment is evident in their positive attitudes, especially when they participate in speaking tasks. Here, they cope very well, demonstrating good pronunciation and often use their imagination and creativity in a wide range of familiar and unfamiliar situations.
- Students apply grammatical rules and their good literacy skills successfully when producing extended pieces of writing. Those who need additional support benefit from carefully structured activities including word frames. Students say they find listening to the foreign language the most

challenging skill, but many show determination when listening to longer extracts of the spoken language.

- Discussions with students demonstrated their good awareness of the cultures of countries where French and German are spoken, and they can clearly identify the advantages of speaking a ML to secure future employment.
- Achievement in the sixth form is satisfactory, but rapidly improving due to the quality of teaching. Attainment has been variable in German.

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

The quality of teaching in ML is outstanding.

- Teachers are passionate about ML and their great enthusiasm, linked with very high expectations of themselves and of students, has secured an outstanding quality of teaching. Consequently, students' outcomes are now rapidly improving. Teachers present an element of challenge in every lesson, and most students respond accordingly. Lessons are exceptionally well planned, so that the needs of different groups of students are met. Students are engaged in their learning and told the inspector that they appreciate the wide range of activities they experience in their lessons.
- Teachers make good use of the language being taught in lessons and students readily use the language to communicate with the teacher and each other. Good use is made of a range of resources in lessons, including the use of video-digital recording. However, some students in Key Stage 3 commented that some teachers tend to rely too heavily on the course book. Assessment is regular and developmental in focus and students respond positively to teachers' comments.
- Teachers' awareness of the needs of different groups of students is helping to narrow any gaps in attainment and securing rapidly improving outcomes. For example, a 'spelling bee' competition observed in a Key Stage 3 lesson skilfully addressed lower levels of literacy among Black Caribbean boys.

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

The quality of the curriculum in ML is good.

- The broad curriculum presents opportunities for more able linguists to study two languages in Year 9. Currently, no students have taken up the option to study two languages in Key Stage 4. Schemes of work have recently been reviewed and present regular opportunities for assessment and for the use of information and communication technology. Some students in Year 7 reported that they feel teachers could take greater account of their language acquisition in primary school when planning lessons.
- Students' awareness of the cultures of the countries where the languages are spoken is developed well. In addition to visits abroad, the school has formed good links with the Goethe Institute and the Institut Français in

London. Students in Year 12, who do work experience abroad, speak positively about the impact this has on their cultural awareness and on their confidence in speaking the language.

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

The effectiveness of leadership and management in ML is good.

- ML is well led and the cohesive team makes good use of the latest methodology in lessons. Faculty-improvement documentation is rightly focused on continuing to raise attainment, but occasionally opportunities are missed to make direct reference to the performance of different groups of students and to narrow any remaining gaps in their attainment.
- Procedures for monitoring, reviewing and evaluating the work of the faculty are good, and scrutiny of minutes of meetings shows that discussions based around the sharing of good practice are a common occurrence.
- Leaders and managers have secured an uptake of ML at Key Stage 4 which is well above the national average. Plans are currently being discussed to introduce the second ML in Year 8 instead of Year 9. Links with local primary schools exist, but are not yet maximised.

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

- strengthening links with local primary schools to build on the skills students have acquired in Year 6
- finely tuning improvement planning with a focus on narrowing gaps in attainment of different groups of students
- investigating strategies which will increase the proportion of students who study two modern languages beyond Key Stage 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

**John Daniell**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**