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Mr M Garlick  
Headteacher  
Hartshill School  
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Dear Mr Garlick

**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 14 and 15 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 five lessons.

The overall effectiveness of ML is satisfactory and makes a good contribution to students' cultural development.

**Achievement in ML**

Achievement in ML is satisfactory and improving securely.

- Standards in GCSE exams are rising and current data indicate another rise for 2012 which will bring them into line with, and in some cases above, the national average. All groups are making similar progress.
- Some students are confident speakers when participating in speaking tasks, but many have weak pronunciation. They are less confident when dealing with the unpredictable elements in speaking assessments. The majority enjoy their language learning.
- Students produce good written work because teachers support them to use writing frames and models to develop their writing ability. The skills of reading and listening are developing more slowly because these are not

supported through reading for pleasure and through listening to teachers using the language being studied in lessons. Students find listening the most challenging of the assessment tasks.

- Students have a good awareness of the cultures of the countries and communities where the language is spoken because of the constant support for the development of this aspect throughout lessons and through carefully designed homework tasks.
- Students are very aware of the advantages of learning languages for their future economic wellbeing and some even spoke about the need to break down barriers between different cultures.

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

The quality of teaching in ML is satisfactory with many good features.

- Teachers communicate enthusiasm about languages and have a high level of subject knowledge and understanding of effective language teaching and learning.
- Well-planned activities guide and support students to make good progress in many lessons.
- Students are over-reliant on text when speaking and, as their knowledge of sound-spelling links is weak, some do not speak with fluency or accurate pronunciation.
- Routine classroom communication by the teacher is in the target language for the most part in the earlier years, but wanes as students move through the school and exam pressures take precedence. Expectations of target language use by students are too low. Teachers miss opportunities to develop students' spontaneity by over-reliance on translations.
- Assessment is well planned and used to inform students of their targets. They have a satisfactory understanding of what they need to do to improve. Marking is carried out regularly and gives students information on how to improve.

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

The quality of the curriculum in ML is satisfactory.

- The curriculum includes opportunities for learning more than one language. It has some imaginative features such as the learning projects on the school's website for homework and a range of transition projects for Year 9.
- Schemes of work are in the process of being re-designed to address the changing needs as the subject improves and develops.
- Students are provided with some first-hand experience of different cultures through visits and visitors. Extra-curricular activities are mainly additional opportunities to study a second language or practise for examinations.

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

The effectiveness of leadership and management in ML is satisfactory.

- You and your senior leaders are very supportive of the subject after a period where it was low on the school's list of priorities. The subject leader is well informed about current issues in the subject and is driving improvements successfully.
- Monitoring and evaluation of provision are regular and draw on a good range of evidence.
- The department is adequately resourced to support language learning, but better use could be made of technology to promote listening.
- Transition is adequately managed and the school has given good support to its feeder primaries.
- The proportion of Year 10 and Year 11 students taking a language is increasing rapidly.

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

- developing students' fluency by:
  - increasing the use teachers make of the language being studied to manage their lessons and increasing their expectation of its use by students
  - improving students' pronunciation
  - building strategies to reduce students' reliance on written prompts
- improving students' listening skills by:
  - increasing the use teachers make of modelling rather than explanation and translation when setting tasks in lessons
  - providing more opportunities for students to listen at their own pace to recordings of native speakers by exploiting the potential of technology
- extending the work to improve uptake in KS4.

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**