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Mrs K Potter
Headteacher
St Helen's Primary School
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Dear Mrs Potter

Ofsted 2012–13 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 22 May 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 two lessons.

The overall effectiveness of ML is satisfactory.

Achievement in ML

Achievement in ML is satisfactory.

- Pupils enjoy learning languages and work hard in lessons. They are willing to speak French, German or Spanish and do so with good pronunciation.
- They are developing satisfactory skills for language learning and a good understanding of links between sounds and spellings to support their literacy. In addition, they have a satisfactory understanding of grammatical conventions.
- The progress made by all groups is satisfactory and boys and girls are equally well motivated.
- Pupils have a satisfactory understanding of the usefulness of ML study for their future lives, but their understanding of the cultures of the countries where the languages are spoken is underdeveloped.

Quality of teaching in ML

The quality of teaching in ML is satisfactory.

- Teachers provide engaging and fun activities in their lessons, including games and songs.
- Pupils have regular opportunities to speak, but some pupils are required to move to productive use of new language before they are completely confident. Insufficient use is made of repetition and teachers do not check often enough that all pupils have had sufficient practice.
- Teachers provide a good model of spoken language for the pupils to emulate and good use is made of recordings of native speakers. As a result, pupils have good pronunciation.
- Good use is made of storybooks to engage pupils and help them remember new vocabulary and phrases.
- Progress in lessons is satisfactory rather than good because lesson planning does not identify in sufficient detail how the different activities will be fully exploited to ensure that all pupils can meet the learning objectives of the lesson.
- Teachers do not make enough use of the language being studied for managing routines and giving praise. They often switch between English and the ML, reducing pupils' opportunities to develop language skills such as deducing meaning from visual clues or context.
- Opportunities are missed in lessons to develop pupils' intercultural understanding.

Quality of the curriculum in ML

The quality of the curriculum in ML is satisfactory.

- You have devised a curriculum model for ML that adequately meets the needs of the secondary schools to which your pupils transfer. The revisions that have been started are making the curriculum more coherent.
- Enrichment includes themed days once per year. Pupils do not currently have opportunities to interact with native speakers.
- Displays and signage around the school are underused to promote cultural understanding and give greater prominence to the subject.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in ML

The effectiveness of leadership and management in ML is satisfactory.

- You have started to develop ML in the school and have made satisfactory progress in ensuring that pupils receive their full entitlement. Some monitoring of provision has been undertaken.
- The subject benefits from good resources including information and communication technology.

- Plans have been drawn up for the subject's further development, but they are not based on incisive self-evaluation and therefore miss some of the most urgent priorities.
- The subject has limited capacity to improve rapidly due to the absence of subject expertise and the school would benefit from some external support. Class teachers do not experience the ML lessons as they are delivered in their preparation time and this limits their capacity to build on the weekly sessions.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- strengthening subject leadership to increase the capacity to develop the subject further
- refining schemes of work to ensure that the expected progress pupils will make in each language is clearly identified
- improving the quality of teaching by:
 - developing routines to support greater use of the language being studied to manage classroom activities
 - ensuring that lesson plans clearly identify the learning objectives and how the planned activities will be used to support all pupils to meet them.

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