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Mrs B Allan
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Allan

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 29 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 three lessons.

The overall effectiveness of ML is outstanding.

Achievement in ML

Achievement in ML is outstanding.

- Achievement is outstanding across the school, from Reception through to Year 6. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils' attainment is well above average overall. The school has made excellent progress in implementing the entitlement to learning a foreign language.
- Pupils of all ages show great enthusiasm for their French lessons and can give many reasons why it is useful to learn a language. They enjoy reading stories in the foreign language and listen well to their teachers and to each other. Pupils speak confidently and with sheer enjoyment, willingly reciting rhymes and singing songs they have learnt. For the most part, they have good pronunciation and intonation.

- Pupils' writing skills are particularly well developed. They demonstrate a good understanding of grammatical rules and apply them accurately. Their skills improve as they go through the school, so that by the end of Year 6 they can write creatively, accurately and at length using a variety of tenses and a wide-ranging vocabulary.

Quality of teaching in ML

The quality of teaching in ML is good.

- Teachers demonstrate considerable passion for languages and their enthusiasm is communicated highly effectively to pupils. Lessons are well constructed with a wide range of activities that engages pupils and stimulates their imaginations.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is variable but the school has planned provision astutely so that this is not an impediment to pupils' achievement. Good practice in the use of the target language as the natural means of communication in the classroom exists, but it is inconsistent, particularly lower down the school.
- Teachers use information and communication technology highly effectively to make lessons interesting. For example, pupils were filmed presenting a weather forecast in the foreign language and pupils in Year 1 clearly enjoyed singing along to a video clip of French children singing 'Old MacDonald had a farm'. In addition, teachers also listen to recordings of French speakers on podcasts to refresh their skills.
- A particular strength is the thorough approach taken to teaching sound-spelling links. As a result, pupils read aloud fluently and with good pronunciation.
- Assessment is used effectively and teachers design lessons that are deftly tailored to meet the needs of individuals. Pupils also benefit from enthusiastic teaching assistants, ensuring that all pupils can participate in their language lessons, whatever their ability.

Quality of the curriculum in ML

The quality of the curriculum in ML is outstanding.

- The curriculum is broad and balanced. Progression in all four skills is embedded. Schemes of work are constantly reviewed and adjusted to ensure that lessons meet the needs of pupils. All pupils throughout the school receive discrete language lessons, and this is followed up by class teachers at other times in the school day, for example in taking the register.
- Special events showcase languages, such as the 'French Day', when pupils can dress up and eat French food. The school also benefits from productive links with a local secondary school. Primary pupils attend the secondary school's 'Languages Day' and secondary students visited the school to teach Spanish to pupils in Year 5.

- Pupils have a very good grasp of French culture, given their stage of development. The school welcomes native speakers of other languages, who attend assemblies and theme days. Imaginative opportunities for cross-curricular projects also enhance pupils' intercultural understanding.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in ML

The effectiveness of leadership and management in ML is outstanding.

- High-quality leadership emanates from you. You clearly articulate the role that languages play in developing skills across the curriculum and how learning languages complements the broader ethos of the school, promoting tolerance and understanding of other cultures.
- Teachers express confidence in the leadership of the subject and a shared sense of purpose exists across the school. The local authority has demonstrated considerable commitment to promoting languages in the primary phase and the school has benefitted enormously from this support.
- Rigorous procedures for monitoring and evaluation are utterly embedded and are part of the normal routine of the school. Checks on teachers' planning, work scrutiny, lesson observations and pupil interviews all form part of highly effective practice in this respect. The department constantly reviews its own effectiveness and as a result, planning for future development of this area of the curriculum is sharply focused.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- embedding the consistent use of the target language by both teachers and pupils, by sharing existing good practice.

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

Joan Davis
Her Majesty's Inspector