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Mrs Ritu Aulakh
Hounslow Heath Junior School
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Dear Mrs Aulakh

Subject inspection of Hounslow Heath Junior School

Following my visit to your school on 20 November 2019, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. The findings do not change the overall effectiveness judgement of outstanding from the last section 5 inspection.

This inspection was conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and in accordance with Ofsted's published procedures for a no formal designation inspection of schools. The inspection was carried out to enable Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to better understand the quality of education in specific subjects provided by outstanding primary schools.

Main findings

Modern foreign languages (MFL) is an important part of the school's curriculum. All pupils have a weekly one-hour French lesson with a specialist teacher. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) at the school's two specialist resource provisions. Leaders have given the MFL team the necessary time and resources so that French can be taught successfully. The school has a specialist French teacher who plans and delivers the French curriculum. A French teaching assistant also helps to deliver lessons and ensures that the curriculum leader does not work too much in isolation.

The French curriculum is ambitious and, in many ways, it exceeds the subject content of the national curriculum. Leaders regularly review the curriculum so that it is coherently planned and sequenced. The subject content is selected to fit in with the overarching cross-curricular topics, but links are not made for the sake of it. Leaders ensure that the language learning is purposeful. For example, Year 5 pupils developed their use of adjectives and comparatives through their work on the planets. In Year 3, pupils learned about the history and geography of the Lascaux caves.

The curriculum has a strong focus on vocabulary. Curriculum plans show many opportunities for pupils to revisit vocabulary and use it in different ways. Pupils can remember many common words and phrases they have learned previously. For example, Year 6 pupils had learned weather vocabulary in Year 5 and used it again to talk about what they needed to wear in different seasons. However, when previous vocabulary has not been embedded in pupils' memories, they struggle to use it with the new vocabulary that has been introduced.

The curriculum does not have enough emphasis on grammar. Pupils understand some concepts, such as genders and adjectival agreement. They do not know the basic components of a sentence in French, such as personal pronouns and key verbs. This means that pupils struggle to create or manipulate a sentence independently. Staff scaffold sentence structure very clearly so that pupils can build up their own complex sentences, but pupils are limited to replacing individual words or parts of the sentence. Staff are wary of teaching grammar as they fear it will deter pupils from language learning.

Pupils are taught to make links between how words are written in French and how they sound. Staff model and reinforce correct pronunciation. Pupils can pronounce familiar words fairly accurately. Many of them know, for example, the sound of certain letters, such as 'q', and that final consonants are often silent.

Staff use a variety of resources and activities to teach French. For example, pupils often listen to and read French stories and sing French songs. Displays around the school show the high profile of languages. These are often linked to pupils' current learning and reinforce key vocabulary.

Leaders want their pupils to enjoy and value language learning and they have achieved this. Pupils are very enthusiastic about their French lessons. They also enjoy learning about various aspects of francophone culture and traditions. For example, recently, the school celebrated 'La Toussaint'. The school's 'Bastille Day' involves activities such as boules competitions, a French cafe run by Year 6 pupils and the study of pointillism. The 'MFL Extension Group' gives Year 6 pupils the chance to learn additional language and skills. This term they studied and performed a French version of 'Rama and Sita' for the rest of the school.

Evidence

I met with you, the curriculum leader and specialist teacher for French, the specialist French teaching assistant and the assistant headteacher responsible for foundation subjects. I visited lessons in Years 3, 5 and 6 and spoke to pupils from these lessons about their work in French. I also met with an additional group of pupils from the 'MFL Extension Group'. I looked at a selection of pupils' work from the lessons I visited. I evaluated the curriculum plans in French, including medium- and long-term plans.

Context

Hounslow Heath Junior School is larger than the average junior school. There are currently 837 pupils on roll. The school has expanded in recent years from four to seven forms of entry. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is above average. Many pupils are bilingual or multilingual. The proportion of pupils who are entitled to free school meals is above average. The school has a higher-than-average proportion of pupils with SEND, including pupils with an education, health and care plan. The school has two specialist resource provisions on site. One is for pupils with physical disabilities and currently has five pupils. The other caters for pupils with moderate learning difficulties and has eight pupils. Pupils in both centres have access to mainstream lessons.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Hounslow. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Jude Wilson

Her Majesty's Inspector