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Mr S Baines  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Baines

Ofsted survey inspection programme – modern languages

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation during my visit on 1 February to look at work in modern languages. I extend my thanks to your pupils and staff.

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of the subject, the visit had a particular focus on implementing languages entitlement.

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. All feedback letters will be published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half-term.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included: interviews with staff and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, and observation of three lessons.

The overall effectiveness of modern languages was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are good.

- Pupils make good progress in lessons.
- During their time learning French they have covered a good range of vocabulary but pupils in Year 6 are slow to recall some key words.
- Pupils can construct sentences with guidance from their teacher.
- They can carry out short conversations using well rehearsed phrases. Their pronunciation is mostly good and never less than satisfactory.

- Pupils' writing in French is neat and accurate.
- Their understanding of sound-spelling links is weak.

### Quality of teaching and learning of modern languages

Teaching and learning are good, with some outstanding features.

- Lessons are well planned. Teachers have a clear understanding of what the pupils are to learn and how they will assess pupils' progress. Their detailed scheduling of activities and careful preparation of resources ensure that lessons run smoothly.
- Teaching has an appropriate focus on enabling pupils to build their own sentences.
- Teachers' knowledge of the language is at least adequate for the lessons they are teaching. One teacher with very good subject knowledge provides an excellent model of pronunciation for her class.
- Teachers try to conduct as much of the lesson as possible in French, but there is room for improvement here.
- Lessons are taught in a lively way with a variety of briskly paced activities. They have a strong emphasis on pupils' active participation, for example through choral repetition, pair work and songs.
- Resources are of good quality and used well. The interactive whiteboard was used effectively in one lesson, for example, to focus pupils' attention on the written word.
- Relationships are very good and behaviour is managed effectively.
- Pupils enjoy their lessons and are keen to contribute in class. They carry out independent work very responsibly.
- Teachers are uncertain about how best to teach grammar.
- Teachers do not always match work well enough to the different levels of ability in the class; on occasion the high attaining pupils are not sufficiently challenged.
- Plans to introduce a more formal approach to assessing and recording pupils' progress are appropriate, but have not yet been implemented.

### Quality of curriculum

The curriculum is satisfactory.

- The time allocated for teaching French is about adequate.
- The content of the scheme of work is suitable and matched to the objectives in the national framework.
- Long-term planning accommodates the complexities of teaching the subject to mixed-age classes.
- Extra curricular activities, special events and attractive displays provide a good range of opportunities for pupils to learn about different languages and cultures.
- Some teachers use different parts of the week to create additional opportunities to practise French, but this varies across the school.

- There are no planned cross-curricular links; for example, pupils do not do simple arithmetic in French.

## Leadership and management of modern languages

The leadership and management of the subject are good.

- You and your coordinator have a clear vision for the subject and a determination to make it successful.
- The school's policy on languages is clearly written, expresses a sound rationale and suitable objectives, and provides useful guidance on teaching.
- Although the school development plan makes no reference to languages, a separate action plan contains suitable activities for improving the subject.
- Although there is no documented plan to provide professional development for all staff, several have already benefited from relevant training.
- There has been no formal monitoring and evaluation of the subject, but senior managers have a good knowledge of its strengths and weaknesses and what needs to be improved.

## Implementing languages entitlement

The school has made very good progress with this.

- The appointment of a subject specialist coordinator, the introduction of French to all classes and the close involvement of the local authority mean that the school is very well placed to deliver the statutory languages entitlement by 2010.
- Planning for transition with the partner secondary schools is limited.

## Inclusion

- All pupils learn French. There is no discernible difference in the achievement of boys and girls.
- The absence of assessment information means the school is unable to establish that all groups of pupils are achieving well.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- implementing an assessment and recording system that indicates how well pupils are making progress
- matching work better to the different levels of ability in the class
- providing further training to ensure all staff have the necessary confidence and competence to teach the subject.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop modern languages in the school.

As I explained in my previous letter, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority and will be published on Ofsted's website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Derek Neil  
Her Majesty's Inspector