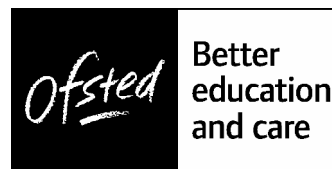


Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404040
F 020 7421 6855
www.ofsted.gov.uk



09 March 2007

Mr Tony Smith
Headteacher
Putteridge High School and Community College
Putteridge Road
Luton
LU2 8HJ

Dear Mr Smith

Ofsted survey inspection programme – modern languages

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff and students, during my visit on 6-7 March to look at work in modern languages (ML).

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of the subject, the visit had a particular focus on how speaking skills are developing, as well as how information and communications technology (ICT) is being used to support the development of languages generally. It also looked at where you are in reaching the benchmarks for provision in Key Stage 4.

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 students, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work and observation of four lessons.

The overall effectiveness of ML was judged to be satisfactory.

Achievement and standards

Overall, achievement and standards are satisfactory.

- According to teacher assessments in 2006 standards reached at the end of Key Stage 3 in French and German were at least in line with expectations and some students achieved more highly. Students' written work in books scrutinised did not show such high levels of achievement. The Year 7

mixed ability German lesson observed demonstrated at least average standards.

- In 2006, GCSE results for the small cohort who opted to study a language were above the national average, both in French and German. It is not possible to compare these with the low results in 2005 since this was the last year in which all students studied a language.
- Progress in three lessons observed was good.
- Students in Year 11 demonstrated some oral skill in responding to examination questions and taking part in role plays, carefully manipulating their German and demonstrating a desire to be accurate. Those in Year 10 were mostly able to understand the gist of quite a complex French passage read at near normal speed with some unfamiliar vocabulary and phrases. They demonstrated reasonable pronunciation and good understanding of an extended written text, again with unfamiliar items.
- In a Key Stage 3 French lesson students were tenacious in trying to respond despite not having had sufficient practice to do so properly. In a German lesson students showed very good prior learning and made good progress in combining new learning to make their own descriptions.
- Students behave very well in lessons, show interest and remain on task. They work and collaborate well in pairs or threes, and in Year 10 demonstrated good team work.
- All students spoken to know why it is useful to learn a language and Key Stage 4 students chose to do so both because they enjoyed it and for its usefulness.

Quality of teaching and learning in ML

Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory.

- Teaching and learning in lessons was mostly satisfactory with much that was good.
- Lesson planning is mostly good. In Key Stage 4 some challenging activities in one lesson, and good preparation and revision in another raised students' awareness very well of the complexity of responses and presentations needed to gain the higher grades in examinations.
- In a well planned Key Stage 3 German lesson students were enabled to use prior knowledge with newly acquired vocabulary to describe family members well.
- The target language is not always used as much as it could be and plenary sessions are sometimes perfunctory rather than assessing just how much has been learned and involving students in that assessment.
- There is too little written work in some books especially in French in Year 7 and too little extended writing in Key Stage 3.
- No ICT was observed and students say they do not use it often. There is also little use of authentic texts to develop reading and writing.
- Assessment is regular in all four skills and feeds into whole school assessment. Whilst this helps with setting it is not yet used as much as it

could be for lesson planning. Moderation of teacher assessment is to be developed.

- All books were marked up to date. There are some comments and some targets but these tend to be too imprecise to be as helpful as they could be and are not given to all students.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory.

- The school provides two languages in both key stages. Currently Year 7 students take both languages and those who achieve well in both after a year continue to do so. Those who achieve less well continue with one language and there is some element of choice. This will change from 2007 when all Year 7 students will take French and those who achieve well will also take up German as a second modern language in Year 8. There is good justification for this restructuring, particularly in view of Year 7 students who will arrive having started French in Key Stage 2.
- Both languages are offered as GCSE options in Key Stage 4. There is no other accreditation.
- The time provided is just about sufficient in Key Stage 3 but the allocation for Year 10 restricts what can be done.
- Schemes of work are under review. A good start was made in German, although there is still a lot missing from the early years, but in French they are mainly copies from the course used. The use of ICT is not well represented in either scheme of work.
- The school maintains a share in the services of two foreign language assistants which ensures that students hear the native language on a regular basis.
- Language learning is enriched by a long-standing German exchange and several residential trips to France, including French and history and French and leisure and tourism. There are also lunchtime clubs run by the foreign language assistants and booster classes after school for Year 11 students.

Leadership and management of ML

Leadership and management are good.

- You and senior leaders are supportive of languages and much has been done to improve the quality of provision over the last two years, and particularly since the last inspection in November 2005.
- External advice and support have been sought and, alongside increasingly strong subject leadership, ML is steadily improving.
- Lesson observations and work scrutiny are regular and are helping to improve teaching and learning. Staff have good opportunities to attend professional development events which are also improving classroom practice.

- The departmental development plan and self-evaluation are good. The subject leader has a clear grasp of strengths and areas for improvement. The department is now more focussed on improvement and intervention. Standards and achievement have improved and the key priorities for improvement are in place.
- The subject leader is aware that there is still much to do, in particular improving some teaching and learning from broadly satisfactory, ensuring students make consistently good progress, and ensuring that schemes of work support students' learning and teachers' planning and teaching, including students' entitlement to use ICT to enhance their learning.
- The handbook contains excellent aims and a wealth of good ideas for language teaching and learning although these are not always practised.

How close the school is to reaching the benchmarks for language take-up in Key Stage 4

- The school made languages optional in 2005/06. Since then about 23% of students has opted to take a language each year. However, this year there are signs that this number may be higher and could reach 30%.
- The school does not offer accreditation other than GCSE and has no formal plans to reach the 50% benchmark. The increased take-up for 2007/08 is put down to recently improving the climate for learning languages in the school. All the students spoken to talked favourably about learning languages.
- At options evenings students find out about the expectations for studying a language beyond Key Stage 3. Students also listen to an external speaker on the usefulness of languages and have some opportunity to discuss it in careers education.

The development of speaking skills

- Students are well prepared for speaking in examinations
- In one lesson students were ill prepared to engage in the dialogue demanded of them due to lack of drill and practice.
- Teachers do not always use the target language to teach the lesson when it is opportune to do so and so pupils miss out on essential role models for more spontaneous use of language. Pupils are generally not well enough prepared to talk in the target languages beyond the topic of the lesson or their examination preparation.

Inclusion

- All students study a language in Key Stage 3. Just a few are withdrawn for extra literacy but are re-integrated.
- Entitlement is well met in Key Stage 4.
- Sometimes pupils' needs should to be better provided for. For example, the needs of recent Polish students should be met in lessons.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- improve marking so that students have more precise targets of what they need to do to improve their writing and use assessment more formatively to plan and provide lessons, taking into account the needs of individuals
- improve the schemes of work so that they are useful planning tools for teaching and ensure that all students receive their entitlement to the National Curriculum programme of study
- decide where ICT can most help students to achieve better and integrate this into the teaching and learning for all students
- help students to be more spontaneous in their use of the target languages from an early stage of learning
- improve the take up in Key Stage 4 by researching a variety of means of provision.

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

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

Yours sincerely

Pam Haezewindt
Her Majesty's Inspector