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01 October 2007

Mrs M Frain  
Headteacher  
St Cuthbert's RC Primary School  
Stratford Road  
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Dear Mrs Frain

Ofsted survey inspection programme – modern languages

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and for the help of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 26 September 2007 to look at work in modern languages.

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.

Schools are expected to provide an entitlement for all pupils in Key Stage 2 to learn a modern language by 2010. As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of the subject, the visit has a particular emphasis on the progress the school is making towards entitlement.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included the following: interviews with staff and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of one lesson.

Achievement and standards

- Pupils in Key Stage 2 cover a good range of vocabulary in the short time they study French but their ability to retain what they have learned is limited.
- Pupils' pronunciation and intonation are good, although some need more help to reproduce sounds that are unfamiliar to them.
- They find it difficult to speak in full sentences and ask questions. They cannot manipulate the language to make up their own sentences.
- They have limited knowledge of sound-spelling links.

- Their written work shows that they can copy-write and read single words accurately.
- The small number of the young pupils who have been attending a weekly French club know several songs and have mastered an impressive range of vocabulary.
- Both younger and older pupils enjoy learning French and know that it is important to learn other languages.

### Quality of teaching and learning in modern languages

- Lessons are well organised and carried out at a brisk, purposeful pace.
- Planning is good. Lessons have clear objectives; activities are carefully designed to achieve those objectives; and additional work is available for quick learners. A detailed timescale helps the teacher to make sure everything runs smoothly.
- The visiting teacher has quickly established constructive relationships with the pupils. Praise and encouragement are used to good effect to make sure everyone feels they are achieving well.
- Lessons are varied; they contain a lot of snappy activities that extend pupils' learning in all four skill areas.
- Activities are designed to ensure that as many pupils as possible enjoy and participate fully in the lesson.
- The observed lesson included an interesting, if slightly rushed, session to develop pupils' intercultural understanding.
- Pupils responded well to the observed lesson; they listened attentively, concentrated throughout, carried out their group and individual work very responsibly and for the most part made good progress.
- Work was at a very elementary level and the more able, older pupils were not sufficiently challenged by it. For example, the teacher used French relatively little for giving instructions and always followed it with an English translation.
- Assessment is good. All pupils learning French are formally and accurately assessed against National Curriculum levels and last year the school included a comment about the progress of some pupils in its report to parents. Written work is marked regularly; teachers' comments are encouraging but do not give pupils advice on how to improve.
- Pupils interviewed said they would welcome more opportunities to use information and communication technology and to be more creative in French.

### Quality of curriculum

- The current model provides pupils with regular teaching by a subject specialist for a satisfactory weekly time allocation.
- A methodical adaptation of a commercial scheme of work ensures that all pupils in the cluster primary schools get a consistent experience before they transfer to secondary school.

- Arrangements for transition between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 are well designed and coherent because the curriculum has been planned by the staff from the partner secondary school.
- The school has been involved in some exciting and award-winning projects about global citizenship and support for its small community of Polish pupils. This work develops pupils' awareness of and interest in other countries and languages.
- The curriculum has some shortcomings, as a result of which pupils make less progress than they might. Pupils have only one contact point with the language each week; classes are large and not supported by teaching assistants; the planned content does not extend pupils in their second year of learning the language; and there is insufficient emphasis in the planning on language learning strategies, phonics, cross-curricular links and creativity.

### Leadership and management of languages

- Senior leaders understand the value of learning languages, have a good knowledge the barriers to be overcome, and are committed to making the subject successful in school.
- A well conceived subject action plan deals with a broad range of key issues such as liaison with other schools, staff development, and assessment.
- Well embedded evaluation of the subject enables managers to know accurately its strengths and weaknesses. A wide-ranging review of the subject last year drew on pupils' views, but more should be done to ensure this source of information is fully explored.
- At present the school relies on the common documentation of the cluster but recognises the importance of agreeing in future its own policy and practice.

### Implementing languages entitlement

- Implementing entitlement is satisfactory. Good progress has been made on a number of fronts and plans for the future are both ambitious and realistic.
- However, the way the subject has been introduced so far has affected only two year groups in Key Stage 2 and has secured no better than satisfactory achievement for these pupils.

### Inclusion

- Inclusion is good.
- All pupils in Years 5 and 6 have an equal entitlement to learning a language.
- Boys and girls achieve equally well.
- Pupils with learning difficulties were well supported in the observed lesson.

- Recent arrivals from Poland are made to feel welcome and their bilingualism is celebrated.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- preparing a scheme of work that resolves the concerns about the present curriculum plan
- providing more challenge for the older, more able pupils
- improving pupils' long term retention of what they have been taught.

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

Derek Neil  
Her Majesty's Inspector