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Mrs L Frize
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Frize

Ofsted survey inspection programme – implementing languages entitlement in primary schools

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and for the help of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 15 October to look at work in modern languages (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. 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 had a particular focus on implementing languages entitlement.

The school has recently introduced languages into the curriculum. The evidence used to inform the judgements made included the following: interviews with staff and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of two lessons.

Achievement and standards

- In the short time they have been learning Spanish, pupils have covered a satisfactory amount of vocabulary.
- Pupils' pronunciation is good.
- Pupils are very enthusiastic about learning Spanish and believe it to be important, but they have a limited understanding of the subject's benefits.

- The small number of pupils who have attended the Spanish club for the past year have a secure knowledge of a good range of vocabulary. When reading, they can understand single words in a familiar context. The more able can apply their knowledge in simple ways; for example, by doing simple mental arithmetic.

Quality of teaching and learning in languages

- Lessons are well planned. They have clear objectives, supported by well designed activities, and a structure which enables the teacher to introduce, practise and consolidate the new learning.
- Lessons are enjoyable and involve pupils in physical activity; this helps them to remember what they are being taught.
- The Spanish language assistant is used extremely well. He provides a good model for everyone's pronunciation, introduces some useful everyday phrases in Spanish, excites the pupils' interest in the people and the culture, and provides some good teaching of small and large groups when invited to by the class teacher.
- Pupils' response to the subject is very good. They enjoy the lessons and the extra-curricular club, try hard to answer questions, carry out pair and group work very responsibly, ask for help when they need it, and make good progress during the class.
- Teachers need to use Spanish more as the main means of communication in lessons, in line with the school's own policy.
- Pupils' progress in Spanish is not formally assessed but the school has plans to introduce a more structured approach to assessment and recording during the year.

Quality of the curriculum for languages

- The arrangements for including Spanish in the curriculum are based on a sound rationale and have several advantages; for example, the ratio of adults to pupils is good, and classes have regular contact with a Spanish national as well as with their own class teacher.
- The time allocated to the subject in discrete lessons is not generous but class teachers supplement it with additional time throughout the week; it was not possible during the visit to establish the amount and quality of this additional work.
- Teachers base their lessons on the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority's scheme of work, but the school has not developed its own scheme to reflect its own context and aims. It does not, for example, plan how it will exploit the distinctive multilingualism of its pupil and local community; or how it will build up pupils' progress from their early start in the Foundation Stage.
- Planning for transition to Key Stage 3 is very limited. Pupils transfer to a number of different secondary schools; these have not been involved much in supporting the school's development of the languages curriculum in Key Stage 2.

- The subject has a very visible presence in the school's overall curriculum: Spanish display is abundant throughout the building; special events and assemblies are used to develop pupils' knowledge of the Spanish way of life; other subjects, such as art, are used to extend pupils' knowledge of Spanish culture. There are plans to exploit a school link with Galicia.

Leadership and management of languages

- Senior leaders have a clear commitment to the subject; this is reflected, for example, in the resources that have been allocated to introduce Spanish across the whole school.
- The staff's enthusiasm for the subject is supported by a sensible action plan and their attendance at a variety of substantial in-service training.
- The policy on languages is clear and relevant to the school's context. It sets out an ambitious vision of how the subject is meant to look as different elements of the plan are implemented. It does not outline how some of the distinctive challenges faced by the school – extended absences and significant inward mobility – are to be tackled.
- The school makes good use of different types of support; for example, it has exploited a link with another local primary school which has more experience of teaching the subject.
- Because Spanish has been introduced only recently and as the coordinator is new to the role there has been little formal monitoring and evaluation of the subject.

Implementing languages entitlement

- The school has made satisfactory progress with implementing pupils' entitlement to learn a modern language.
- All pupils in all year groups now learn Spanish for a little time every week.
- All teaching and support staff have benefited from some staff development.
- Although the current arrangements are very recent, managers have a well considered and resourced plan for improving provision over the coming year.
- Managers have a good understanding of the issues involved in making the subject successful.

Inclusion

- All pupils have an equal entitlement to learn Spanish in curriculum time.
- There are no discernible differences in attitudes or achievement between different groups of learners; this is unsurprising since the subject has only been introduced very recently.

- The school has some good ideas for celebrating the multilingualism of its pupil community and could plan these more systematically into its curriculum.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- building a scheme of work that is specific to the school's situation
- planning for transition between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 with the secondary schools
- introducing more formal arrangements to assess pupils' progress and to evaluate the subject's effectiveness.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop languages 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

Derek Neil
Her Majesty's Inspector