

Alexandra House  
33 Kingsway  
London  
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404040  
F 020 7421 6855  
[enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)



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Mrs M McGee  
Headteacher  
St Aidan's Catholic Primary School  
Rackhouse Road  
Northern Moor  
Manchester  
M23 0BW

Dear Mrs McGee

Ofsted survey inspection programme – implementing languages entitlement in primary schools

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and for the help of the staff and pupils, during my visit on 16 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 evidence used to inform the judgements included: interviews with staff and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of two lessons.

#### Achievement and standards

- By the end of Key Stage 2 pupils are working at Level 2 of the National Curriculum. Given the time they have been learning Italian, this is insufficient progress. However, after a number of recent staff changes Italian is now taught by a new teacher and pupils make at least satisfactory progress in lessons.
- Pupils cover a good range of vocabulary and retain it well. In Year 6, for instance, they have a good grasp of numbers to 20, colours, food,

and basic greetings. However, they are unable to use their vocabulary to construct sentences.

- Younger pupils listen and speak with confidence and accuracy. Older pupils are more self-conscious when speaking the language and feel less comfortable when they have to listen to a lot of spoken Italian.
- Pupils copy-write words and phrases neatly and accurately. More able pupils can write some phrases from memory, though they are seldom expected to do so. Their knowledge of sound-spelling links is weak.
- Pupils enjoy learning Italian and have a good understanding of why it is important to learn other languages. Many would like to learn more languages.

### Quality of teaching and learning in languages

- Teaching is lively and energetic. The teacher's enthusiasm greatly contributes to pupils' enjoyment of lessons.
- Much of the lesson is carried out in Italian. Pupils' listening skills and pronunciation benefit greatly by this exposure to the language spoken by a native speaker.
- Lessons contain a good variety of interesting activities.
- Pupils respond well; many are keen to volunteer answers and to perform dialogues in front of the class.
- At times the emphasis on asking questions for individuals to answer in front of the whole class means that many pupils are not actively participating in the lesson for significant periods.
- Because the teacher does not yet know the classes well enough, work is not matched to meet the individual needs of the pupils; consequently, some do not get enough support and others are not stretched sufficiently.
- Lessons make little use of information and communication technology.
- There are no arrangements for assessing and recording pupils' progress in the subject.

### Quality of curriculum

- The school's arrangements for including Italian in the curriculum have a number of strengths. They ensure that pupils are taught by a specialist languages teacher, that they hear a native speaker as their model, and that the class teacher, who sits in on each lesson, has a valuable opportunity for professional development. Furthermore, pupils are taught for about an hour a week, which is in line with national recommendations.
- The arrangements have several shortcomings, however. The curriculum content is not determined by the school, so it does not reflect its own aims and context; it makes no links with other subjects, for example, and it does not exploit the multilingual opportunities offered by the school community. The reliance on a visiting teacher

makes the school vulnerable to staff changes and gives the pupils only one weekly contact with the subject.

- The scheme of work, which has been devised by a local consortium under the aegis of the Italian Consulate, does not give the teacher enough structure to plan for pupils to make good progress over the key stage; although pupils in Year 6 have covered more vocabulary, their linguistic skills are no higher than those of younger pupils. The scheme is not based on the government's *Key Stage 2 Framework for Languages*, so the development of important strands such as intercultural understanding and language learning strategies is not prominent.
- Pupils transfer after Key Stage 2 to a number of different secondary schools; planning in languages does not take into consideration the language offer at pupils' next school, and assessment records are not passed on to the new teachers.

### Leadership and management of languages

- The school's policy presents a clear and sensible rationale for learning languages, but the rest of it is out of date and does not reflect the current position.
- In your role as subject leader, you do not formally monitor and evaluate teaching and learning in Italian. The lack of assessment in the subject means that managers do not know how well individuals and groups of pupils are making progress. Nonetheless, you are aware of the challenges the school faces in developing the subject; you recognise that in time the current arrangements will need to change.
- Modern languages do not feature in the school improvement plan; this is understandable as managers have needed to focus on raising standards in the core subjects.

### Implementing languages entitlement

- The school has made satisfactory progress with implementing pupils' entitlement to learn a modern language. All pupils learn Italian in Key Stage 2 and the subject is well established in the school; it has been taught by a subject specialist in curriculum time for several years now.
- Managers, staff, and pupils are enthusiastic about languages.
- Apart from enjoying the benefits of observing their classes being taught by a specialist, the school's staff have not had any training or professional development in teaching languages.
- The school has limited control over the curriculum and teaching methods used in languages.

### Inclusion

- Almost all pupils in Key Stage 2 receive their entitlement to learning a language.

- Because work is not always well matched to pupils' needs, some low ability pupils get insufficient support and more able pupils are not challenged enough.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring that pupils make better progress in Key Stage 2
- planning better for pupils' transfer to secondary school
- training the school's staff to carry out their management and teaching roles in languages when these have been decided.

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