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Mrs Burn  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Burn

Ofsted survey inspection programme – modern languages

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and those of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 19 November 2007 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 made included: interviews with staff and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of five lessons.

#### Achievement and standards

- Pupils are keen to participate, especially in oral work. They have good pronunciation and they are confident, even when talking to adults they do not know in the classroom. For example, Year 3 could hold a mini conversation, saying hello and asking and answering questions about name and age.
- Pupils throughout the school know how to greet people and use a few expressions in many other languages. This is because they are encouraged to teach each other a language that they speak at home and to learn from other adults who visit the school.

- Pupils listen very attentively to various sources of language which include native speakers and teachers as well as recordings of songs and spoken language.
- Pupils are beginning to be able to say how they learn a language, such as 'I remembered the song' or 'I remembered the funny picture'.
- Pupils develop the ability to guess the meaning of new words from context, for example one pupil in Year 5 worked out what the foreign language assistant was asking her by looking at the pictures of colours in front of her and guessing that she must be asking which colour was the pupil's favourite.
- Pupils' reading is developing but not yet as extensively as their speaking and writing. They are able to make some links between sounds and spelling rules, such as the silent final consonant, but this is not always consistently taught. Pupils see the written version of words that they are learning, using cards and the whiteboard, but pupils do not often read stories and more extensive texts. Few pupils are able to use a glossary or dictionary confidently yet.
- Writing is mostly word level and often involves copying, such as labelling a beach scene or filling in a worksheet with details of a pet's name, age and colour. Pupils do this accurately.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning languages and they know that it might be useful. For example, one girl had learnt the German to be able to order a lemonade as she said she liked to drink this and would need to know how to get it; another said that 'you have to learn a language to go to other countries...you need to talk to them'.
- Pupils are aware of some of the differences and similarities between England and other countries, especially in terms of the food, dress and traditions at festivals.

#### Quality of teaching and learning in ML

- Teachers have good subject knowledge. They have had plenty of support from local training sessions and also many have a qualification in the language that they teach.
- The local language college training has been especially effective in ensuring that teachers know how to teach a language and also have the relevant language skills. The scheme of work, which was jointly written by a teacher from this school with language college personnel, is very effective in providing all class teachers with suggestions about what to teach and how to do so, as well as suggesting useful resources.
- The foreign language assistant is used very effectively to support both pupils and teachers in their language development.
- ICT is well used, especially the interactive whiteboard. There is a mixture of home-made and commercial resources which appeal to pupils and help them to remember new language.
- Feedback to pupils in class is helpful, especially to enable them to improve their oral work but more formal assessment of pupils'

performance is not yet well developed. The school is working on this and is aware that the system needs to be useful both internally and for the schools that pupils will go on to.

- Teaching meets the needs of the various groups of pupils. Those who need extra support are given this either by the teacher or the teaching assistant, some of whom speak another language, and the lessons are planned to take the different needs of pupils into account.
- Resources are well selected, pace is good and there is a wide range of activities, from songs and games to pair work and worksheets.
- Pupils enjoy the lessons and try hard, even if they find things difficult. In one lesson, for example, only a very few pupils had managed to understand all the new words for parts of the body so they asked to do the activity again.
- There is some teaching of knowledge about language and how a language works, such as teaching pupils about masculine and feminine nouns, but teachers do not consistently use common terminology and so links with literacy are not always reinforced.
- The teaching of language learning skills is not always explicit. For example, there were some missed opportunities when pupils were learning a long list of nouns to remind them about how they could remember them, such as using a rhyme, using actions or other mnemonics.

### Quality of curriculum

- The curriculum is very well designed. All pupils in Reception and Key Stage 1 learn a range of languages and about different cultural traditions.
- In Key Stage 2 all pupils learn French. Pupils have 30 minutes a week of discrete language teaching by their class teacher, often supported by a foreign language assistant, and at least 10-15 minutes of reinforcement or follow up at other points during the week, such as when taking the register or giving general instructions.
- Pupils have plenty of opportunities to learn other languages through clubs and themed days. For example, they learnt a range of languages during the European Day of Languages when children from the local language college come to teach them. They also make the most of the 15 other languages that are spoken by pupils in the school, teaching their friends basic phrases in another language.
- In Key Stage 1 pupils have learnt Japanese very successfully from a teacher employed by the local language college.
- Pupils are encouraged to learn some of the language connected with the topic they are studying, such as some Spanish phrases as part of the Arts week which focussed on Brazil.
- Pupils have access to a range of resources to learn language but there are currently only a few reading materials and activities to help build up their written language.

- The scheme of work provides a very good foundation to ensure that there is progression in pupils' learning and there is a strong focus on links with the Key Stage 2 Framework for Languages, especially on elements such as oracy and intercultural understanding.

### Leadership and management of ML

- The rationale for learning a language is very clear to pupils, teachers, parents and governors. The aim, which is to make children aware of both the culture and language of other nations, is well described and put into practice.
- Developing the capacity of staff to teach a language has been a separate and well identified part of the school improvement plan for the last four years.
- The subject is very well co-ordinated at the school. Teachers are encouraged to attend local training and make use of local support which has been very effective in ensuring that teachers are prepared well to teach languages. Consequently, all pupils in Key Stage 2 learn French and all those in Reception and Key Stage 1 learn a range of languages and make good progress.
- Planning for progression between Key Stage 2 and 3 is under way in consultation with the language college and other local schools. The school is investigating the potential for using the Languages Ladder as a system to describe what pupils can do. Staff have already started to collect information on pupils' progress and to exemplify this in folders.
- Teaching assistants and other adults who speak another language are very effectively deployed. This includes the foreign language assistant, parents, staff such as the Japanese teacher from the language college and visitors.
- Monitoring of teaching is at an early stage and has been supported by joint observation with staff from the language college working with one year group. The school has correctly identified monitoring as an area for further development.

### Implementing languages entitlement

- Already all pupils in Key Stage 2 learn French and all pupils in Reception and Key Stage 1 learn a variety of other languages.
- There is a very clear rationale for language learning, backed up by training and support for staff.
- Languages are taught by the class teacher and supported by the co-ordinator for languages, a French assistant (provided by the Local Authority), and by the local training offered by the language college and others.
- Teaching and learning are developing well; pupils have plenty of opportunities to practise their oral work and listening skills and they have good recall pronunciation and fluency.

- Reading and writing are also developing well but are not yet as well established in lessons as speaking and listening.
- Pupils develop a good understanding of other cultures and have very positive attitudes to learning a language.
- Very effective leadership and management ensure that there is good training for all staff which focuses both on language skills and on how to teach a language.
- Links with other secondary schools are developing and the school is investigating effective ways to share information about pupils' progress.

## Inclusion

- All pupils learn a language and all make good progress.
- Most teachers plan well to meet the needs of the different pupils in their class.
- Good use is made of teaching assistants and foreign language assistants to support different groups of pupils. Sometimes pupils are extracted from the lesson to have more intensive work or are given extra support or extension work in class.
- Pupils who speak another language are given every opportunity to show off their talents.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- increasing the range of reading materials and teaching pupils more explicitly about how language works and language learning skills
- continuing to work on assessing pupils' progress both for internal and external transfer purposes
- continuing to develop ways to monitor the development of languages and the quality of teaching.

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

Joanna Peach  
Additional Inspector