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Mrs V Buckeridge
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Buckeridge

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 27 September 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 the progress the school is making towards entitlement.

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

Achievement and standards

- No reading or written work was seen, as it is not yet part of your ML curriculum.
- There is considerable variation in standards and progress within your vertical groupings. Although all pupils speak confidently with a good accent and take part enthusiastically in games and songs, the oldest and more able are not sufficiently challenged. They are repeating work, which they know well when they should be extending their knowledge and skills. They know little about the country, whose language they are learning.

Quality of teaching and learning in ML

- The teacher's command of French presents the pupils with an outstanding role model and her musical skills contribute significantly to learning and enjoyment. There is a wide variety of resources in use, including puppets, and native French speakers visit the school. Pupils respond naturally in French to situations and questions.
- Pupils respond well to the work in phonics, which is a testimony to the accuracy of their pronunciation. However the tasks involving puppets could be extended.
- The lack of formal assessment is a drawback, as there is no basis for planning teaching and learning to meet pupils' individual needs. As a result the learning of older and more able pupils is restricted and they are not making appropriate progress.
- The use of information and communication technology is not yet developed.

Quality of curriculum

- You have taken a policy decision to concentrate on speaking and listening, which has resulted in pupils' confidence in these skills, although the content could be extended. Singing, games and the use of puppets is a major part of learning and contributes to pupils' enjoyment of lessons. There are French words on posters around the school and pupils do occasionally copy French words and phrases.
- The present time allocation of 25 minutes once a week without follow up during the week is insufficient to ensure appropriate levels of progress, although you are planning to revise this very soon.
- You are currently adapting a scheme of work to meet the school's needs and include all topics and skills in the Key Stage 2 Framework.
- A partnership with the local secondary school is planned for the near future.
- You have made significant efforts to introduce pupils to native French speakers, through the Comenius programme and town twinning. Although this has benefited pupils' speaking standards, they need broader opportunities to learn about the culture of France, particularly within the curriculum.

Leadership and management of ML

- You have developed the teaching of French over a number of years and are now ready to take the next steps to fully meet the recommendations of the Key Stage 2 Framework. Although the development of ML was a target in your 2006-7 School Improvement Plan, it does not appear in the 2007-8 plan, when there are still areas to address.

- You successfully bid for resources to develop ML, in partnership with two other local schools.
- Your ML Co-ordinator has undertaken three courses in the development of ML in primary schools. This work has been effective in supporting her development and in bringing new teaching ideas into the classroom. You now plan to train the whole staff to deliver short reinforcement sessions in French, which should give pupils more regular practice in the language.
- Your commitment, and that of your governors, has been a positive factor in developing ML learning in your school.

Implementing languages entitlement

- You have made good progress towards implementing languages entitlement so far.
- You had begun teaching ML some years ago and have progressively extended the experience to all pupils in school. You planned for this development in 2006-7 and implemented your planning through a successful bid for funding and professional development opportunities for your co-ordinator. Although there are still areas to develop further, your 2007-8 planning does not specifically include a target towards implementing languages entitlement.

Inclusion

- All pupils in the school have the opportunity to learn French, including those with special educational needs. Support is available where appropriate.
- However, within the vertical groupings there is insufficient evidence of planning and delivery to meet pupils' individual needs, particularly to challenge the older and more able pupils.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- establishing formal assessment to inform teachers' planning and to report to parents and secondary schools on pupils' standards and progress
- broadening the curriculum and planning and delivering lessons which meet the full range of pupils' needs, to include all four skills, particularly reading and writing for older pupils
- planning for implementing languages entitlement in the school improvement plan.

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

Peter McKenzie
Additional Inspector