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Mrs Julia Morris
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Dear Mrs Morris

Ofsted survey inspection programme – modern languages

I should like to thank your staff and students for their hospitality and co-operation during my visit on 5-6 February 2008 to look at work in modern languages (ML).

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of the subject, the visit had a particular focus on how reading skills are developing and how reading is used to develop language skills. It also looked at where you are in reaching the benchmarks for provision in Key Stage 4.

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.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included: interviews with staff and students, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work and observation of six lessons.

The overall effectiveness of ML was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are good.

- Students in Key Stage 3 attain well above average standards in teacher assessments by the end of Key Stage 3 and go on to achieve above the national average grades at A*-C, mostly converting their National Curriculum levels into expected or better outcomes by the end of Key

Stage 4. The few students who take Advanced Level in Year 13 achieve good results.

- In lessons observed, students made mostly good progress. They were willing speakers responding in French or Spanish to teachers' questions and the tasks set. A Year 7 French class demonstrated orally all that they had learned this year so far, including how they could seek information, and this was impressive.
- Occasionally a few students' progress was hindered by a lack of emphasis on correct pronunciation or on ensuring that a new phrase or concept has been well understood before proceeding to the next.
- Progress in reading and writing is good. Students employ strategies for understanding text and use it to develop their writing skills. They move from word to sentence to text swiftly which ensures that they begin writing more extensively from an early stage of language learning.
- Good emphasis on collaborative work in pairs and groups supports well students' social development. Their willingness to help each other was a very strong feature of language lessons.
- Students demonstrated enjoyment and interest in lessons even where the subject may not be the most engaging, for example, getting to grips with modal verbs. Teaching ensures that learning in such lessons is varied and humorous. Students who spoke to me said that language lessons were enjoyable and fun.
- Older students were very aware of the usefulness of languages beyond school; younger students were more hesitant about this.

Quality of teaching and learning in ML

The quality of teaching and learning is good.

- Lessons observed and discussions with students show that teachers provide a very good atmosphere for learning languages, one in which students feel confident to take risks and 'have a go'. A good example of this was where low ability Year 9 boys contributed with gusto to singing a new song at the end of the lesson.
- Lessons were characterised by good planning of logical sequences of varied activities to achieve shared objectives; good pace and challenge and high expectations of outcomes; involving learners well and appealing to different learning styles. Cultural comparisons with France and Spain were made.
- A good variety of department-produced resources were used well.
- Teachers and learners both used very well the excellent support materials which are on the walls in every language classroom. It is unfortunate that this leaves very little room to display and celebrate students' work.
- Teachers used information communication technology proficiently. It was particularly well used in a Year 13 French lesson to enable the student to deepen her understanding of the use of the subjunctive. Older students say they use it regularly to redraft their writing for accuracy, research the Internet and for revision purposes. However, the picture for younger

students is much more inconsistent with some reporting using it every four lessons and others that they had not yet used it this academic year.

- Assessment for learning is not yet used regularly in lessons, for example, for self and peer-evaluation. Marking is sufficiently detailed and mostly helpful although it could be improved by praise and comments in the target language and by consistent correction of the spellings students should know. Regular assessments in all skills ensure that students know how well they are doing and can relate this to National Curriculum levels or GCSE grades. Students were able to explain what they needed to do to improve.

Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory.

- Students learn French or Spanish in Key Stage 3. Currently there is no opportunity to learn a second language. At Key Stage 4 there is a choice of French or Spanish or both. A very small number of students take both. Post 16 the school also offers both languages and there is a strong whole-school commitment to provision despite small numbers.
- The time devoted to languages on the time-table is suitable.
- Entitlement at Key Stage 4 is met. The guidance for students to choose a language for at least one of their options in Key Stage 4 is satisfactory.
- Schemes of work are detailed; they are course book based but work satisfactorily and the lessons observed could be traced to the appropriate unit and content; the department is flexible in its approach and not driven by the course book. Departmental, 'home-made' resources are abundant.
- Extra curricular activities such as a study group are satisfactory and visits abroad enhance Key Stage 3 and post 16 students' experience. This is not the case for Key Stage 4. There is also a regular International Day for younger students.
- Languages provision in local primary schools is very variable. Some Key Stage 3 students have had as much as four years experience whilst others have had none. As yet Kineton does not make provision for those who have learned a language before but is in discussion with the primary schools.

Leadership and management of ML

Leadership and management are good.

- The senior leadership team is very supportive and there is strong line-management which ensures that the department is well led and managed.
- There is good use of data to identify weaknesses and individual needs and good evidence to show that the department is working hard to both sustain its good achievement and improve it.
- The Partnership Review between the line manager and the subject leader is a helpful document and the self-evaluation accurate.

- The departmental development plan is precise and manageable for the year. However, it does not tackle key issues such as Key Stage 4 take-up
- Monitoring and evaluation of lessons is regular and evidence shows that it is helpful.
- The school's decision to offer Spanish instead of German was based on a sound rationale that it would be popular with students, which is proving to be the case, as well as on resources.
- The work and development of the Higher Learning and Teaching Assistant who teaches some Year 7 and 8 classes, with a non-languages qualified teacher alongside, is suitably managed.
- Sports College specialism has increased the department's resources but so far has not had an impact on provision though there are some plans afoot for collaborative work.

How close the school is to reaching the benchmarks for language take-up in Key Stage 4

- The school achieved 37% take-up in Year 10 this year. There was a misunderstanding about how to opt resulting in a drop from the previous year and there has been a drop of between 10%-6% since 2005.
- The school's benchmark for next year is 50% and there are signs it may reach it. However, there are no formal plans to achieve it.

The development of reading skills and how well reading is used to develop language skills

Overall, this is good.

- Evidence showed that younger students are learning to recognise cognates and clues as a way to work out meaning. Reading strategies were being underpinned in a Year 11 homework and subsequent lesson to improve examination results. In a Year 13 lesson reading aloud from a projected text helped a student consolidate her knowledge of subjunctives in French.
- Students used reference material regularly, particularly the useful home-made books they have in all years.
- Reading was used well to develop writing skills and knowledge of form and structure; there was little evidence of it being used as a stimulus for speaking skills.
- The department uses a wide range of texts from Year 7 onwards with a variety of tasks; authentic texts and the Internet are used from time to time but not systematically.
- Although there is not a large collection of books in the library, a few students take out books and dictionaries without prompting.

Inclusion

- This is generally satisfactory with evidence of planning and material matched to needs, for example in the Year 7 Spanish lesson.
- Learning support for a vulnerable student was effective.
- Occasionally individual students were rarely called upon to respond and so contributed little orally to the lesson. In one lesson the only two girls in the class were not drawn into the lesson at all and, as a consequence, their progress could not be measured.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring that students' pronunciation is systematically improved through intensive practice and that all students have opportunities to practice and contribute to the lesson orally
- ensuring that all students in Key Stage 3 have opportunities to use ICT to improve and enhance their language learning
- improving take-up in Key Stage 4 through systematically planning for it from Year 7 onwards
- considering how to display and celebrate students' work around the school whilst maintaining the excellent focus on the use of support material in lessons
- planning for Key Stage 3 students who have learned a language in primary school.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop ML in the school.

As I explained in my previous letter, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority and local learning and skills council. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Pam Haezewindt
Her Majesty's Inspector