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Mr R Cotter
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Dear Mr Cotter

Ofsted survey inspection programme – modern languages

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 12 February 2008 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 three lessons.

Context

The school has been teaching French since 2002. Originally this was to Year 6 pupils. Since 2005 it has been teaching French to all pupils in Key Stage 2. It is part of a local cluster group of primary schools which works together to plan and deliver French in Key Stage 2; they share a 'cluster teacher' who teaches two classes a week at Bugbrooke for 30 minutes each. The remaining classes at Bugbrooke are taught by class teachers. This is a joint-funded initiative between the local specialist language college and the cluster primary

schools which use local authority school improvement funds to support the teaching provision and resources.

Achievement and standards

- Pupils' progress in the lessons observed was good and they demonstrated good prior learning.
- They listened very attentively and responded enthusiastically and confidently.
- Generally, their accents and pronunciation were sound.
- Sound-spelling links were good because teachers worked consistently on them.
- Pupils' understanding of basic grammar and structure is developing so that they know about gender and the position of adjectives. In one Year 4 class they spontaneously made up phrases about animals, for example, 'un grand lion jaune', having been taught 'grand' and 'petit' in the lesson and using their prior knowledge, and also querying why the adjective was suddenly in front of the noun.
- Pupils deduced meaning from simple text containing cognates and so reading strategies are developing. Writing is at a very early stage of development but is neat and accurate in the books that were scrutinised.
- Pupils' intercultural understanding is not as broad as it could be at this age.
- They enjoy learning French very much and have some idea of why it could be useful later on in life.

Quality of teaching and learning in ML

- Overall, teachers' methodology is good; they use very well their knowledge of primary teaching and learning to create a secure environment in which to learn a new language. They also make some very appropriate links with other areas of the primary curriculum such as literacy. They are also helping their pupils to develop language learning strategies.
- Occasionally some teachers' pronunciation is weak but this will improve with practice.
- Teachers plan lessons adapting the external scheme of work they use. They plan well for groups' and individual pupils' needs, incorporating the learning and teaching assistants' support well.
- They use information and communication technology to enhance pupils' learning and engage them, particularly through stories. Pupils do not yet use the technology themselves to develop their learning.
- Teachers supplement the resources supplied with the scheme of work as required.
- Lessons end with a recap on learning and there is some pupil self-evaluation, including recently introduced 'can-do' statements. However, more formal assessment is not yet undertaken to provide teachers and

their pupils with a clear indication of progress and what improvements are needed.

Quality of the curriculum

- French is learned by all pupils in Key Stage 2. The model chosen is effective with more and more classroom teachers taking it on helped by the cluster training and the cluster teacher who teaches two lessons a week.
- The time devoted to learning French is suitable especially where classroom teachers are able to provide 40 minute lessons and follow up at other times during the week.
- The scheme of work and activities planned mostly meet the needs of learners and pupils enjoy them a lot. They follow the Key Stage 2 Framework headings. However, formal assessment is not built in but the scheme could be adapted to do so.
- Events such as the International Languages Day and visits from the foreign language assistants at the local Language College enrich the curriculum but intercultural understanding is not developed broadly on a regular basis.

Leadership and management of ML

- There is very good support from the senior leadership team including governors for introducing French to the school.
- The training plan to ensure sustainability is good. The school is working hard to ensure a sufficiency of trained teachers and sustainability by 2010.
- French is led jointly by two teachers who have received co-ordinator training and are shortly to receive training in monitoring and evaluation. The school is aware that this needs to be implemented.
- The school is tackling the teaching of vertically grouped classes, planning accordingly and using the cluster and class teachers to take on different groups when needed.
- Self-evaluation at this stage tends to focus more on provision than on measuring the impact of provision on pupils' achievement both in French and in their broader development. Given the investment of resources the school has made, it is time for all the partners in this 'enterprise' to evaluate the impact in both the short and longer term.
- So far transition to secondary school has been discussed but account has not yet been taken of pupils' achievements in French when they move into Year 7.

Implementing languages entitlement

Implementing entitlement is good.

- The rationale for introducing primary languages via the local cluster group is effective.
- Sustainability in terms of teaching staff and coordination is very good.
- Pupils are making good progress in speaking, listening and reading.
- Pupils are very positive about learning a language and boys and girls are equally motivated.
- The senior leadership team and governors are very committed.
- The school is at a very early stage in terms of pupil assessment, monitoring and evaluation to sustain and improve good provision, and supporting progression from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3 so that their pupils capitalise on what they have learned in Year 7.

Inclusion

All pupils in Key Stage 2 learn French and additional staff are well deployed to help pupils with specific needs.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- improving pupils' cultural development through broadening the languages curriculum
- developing assessment of learning more formally so that progression is clear and pupils know how to improve; working with the secondary school to ensure that pupils' achievements are made known and taken into account
- evaluating the impact of learning French on pupils' achievement and personal development.

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

Pam Haezewindt
Her Majesty's Inspector