

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404040
F 020 7421 6855
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



05 March 2008

Mr W Howsen
Headteacher
St Catherine's Primary School
Haslewood Avenue
Hoddesdon
Herts
EN11 8HT

Dear Mr Howsen

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 5 March 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 two lessons.

Context

The school has been teaching French for just over a year in class time to all Year 6. Pupils also have the opportunity to learn Spanish after school in a club.

Achievement and standards

- Pupils develop good listening skills and can make sense of what the teacher is saying in class using non-verbal clues; they are able to understand simple CDs and DVDs.
- Pupils are very confident and quite fluent when speaking in a limited range of topics, such as name, age, colours and weather.
- They are developing mostly good pronunciation although they have some problems with a few key sounds such as nasal sounds.
- Reading is mostly of single words. Pupils occasionally have opportunities to read full sentences and longer texts but reading is not yet systematically developed to include sound-spelling links and the use of glossaries and dictionaries. The school has plans to introduce story telling in French with tales such as 'Little Red Riding Hood'.
- Writing is currently underdeveloped. Pupils have filled in passport details about themselves and written Christmas cards but this is not a regular feature of their work and is acknowledged to be an area for development by the school.
- Cultural awareness is good. Pupils know about festivals and other similarities and differences in the French and English way of life because many of them take part in at least one trip to France where they have to undertake a series of language and cultural activities.
- Pupils are beginning to understand how language works, for example they are beginning to look at adjectival position and agreement. Their language learning skills are also developing; they know how rhyme can help them to remember phrases and sounds but their understanding of techniques to help them learn to read and write in French are less well developed.
- Pupils are very enthusiastic about learning a language. They would rather have more language learning every week and they know how useful a language can be, they can name several jobs where languages would be used and know that it will help them when they get to secondary school if they can already speak some French.

Quality of teaching and learning in ML

- You attend local authority (LA) training, training offered by the language college and use a local native speaker to help ensure spoken French is accurate.
- The local training offered by the LA and the local language college are helping to widen the repertoire of teaching activities and techniques.
- In class, pupils are clear what they have to do, the pace is good and the work is challenging. There were few opportunities for pair work in the lessons seen. Because of this, some pupils with learning difficulties did not take part as much as their peers.
- Games, songs and the interactive whiteboard are used to good effect to encourage pupils to participate and all pupils interviewed thought

that languages were well taught and fun. Pupils also enjoyed the extended role plays that they had done, such as when they acted out a café scene and performed this in assembly.

- You are beginning to investigate using a wider range of resources as well as the current ones provided by the language college.
- Pupils are not always aware of what they need to do to improve although they know how well they are doing at speaking French because they get feedback in class. Formal monitoring and recording of progress is not yet developed but there is a joint initiative by local primary schools to outline what the pupils will have covered by the time they enter the secondary school.

Quality of curriculum

- The current arrangements are an interim measure to ensure that languages are well taught. The school intends to employ a specialist primary teacher who can co-ordinate the language teaching to cover years three to five from September 2008. Currently there is insufficient expertise to teach classes below Year 6.
- There are few pupils with languages other than English at this school but the school ensures that all pupils know about other languages. The school encourages visitors from abroad and has had native speakers from Japan and Germany working with pupils in the school.
- The curriculum is designed to focus on speaking and listening with some cultural awareness. Pupils get several opportunities for trips abroad. They enjoy these and return with improved oral skills.
- The school also takes pupils to see plays in French that are put on locally for school children; pupils enjoy these and they say they help them to remember language.
- The school uses the scheme of work produced by the local language college and adapts this as necessary for its pupils. There are few opportunities for reading stories and writing activities so the school is planning to supplement this.
- The school is aware of national documentation such as The Key Stage 2 Framework and the QCA scheme of work and is beginning to use these for its planning in order to increase the range of activities offered.

Leadership and management of ML

- There is a sound rationale for teaching French which takes into account teacher expertise and the need to liaise with the local secondary schools in its implementation.
- Monitoring and evaluation are at an early stage but the plans for the development of language teaching are good.
- There is good use of local support from the local authority, and of the money that has been devolved to the school for primary languages to

enable teachers to improve their language skills and knowledge of how to teach primary languages effectively.

- There are few opportunities for the discrete French teaching to be reinforced through other subject areas. The class teacher is not currently supporting any of the teaching of French but there are plans for this to be tackled with the new appointment of a co-ordinator for languages.
- The plans to develop the teaching of French appear on the governors' and the school development plan and this is well supported by appropriate professional development.

Implementing languages entitlement

- The school has recently begun to teach languages and has a clear rationale for this but lacks sufficient expertise at the moment to do this beyond Year 6.
- There are well developed plans to appoint a specialist who will be able to do some language teaching and work alongside other staff to help train them.
- Pupils have made good progress in speaking and listening in the short time they have been learning a language but reading and writing are less well developed.
- There is no formal recording of pupils' progress at the moment.
- All pupils enjoy learning a language and say they would like to do more. They have a good idea about why language learning is important.
- The senior leadership team has included languages in the development plan, has a clear idea of what the priorities are for development and intends to ensure that all pupils in Key Stage 2 have at least 30 minutes of language learning a week by September 2008.
- The school has prepared a document for the secondary schools to show what pupils have covered and intends to include detail on individual pupils' performance once a workable system has been established.

Inclusion

- Pupils with special needs make good progress in speaking and listening along with their peers although the lack of pair work in some lessons means that occasionally they do not take part as much as they might.
- Pupils with a particular talent in languages have yet to be identified formally but enjoy the challenge of learning a language and are beginning to ask questions about how the language works.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- developing reading and writing skills
- increasing the opportunities for language teaching to be reinforced by other members of staff and in cross curricular ways, such as teaching music or physical education in French
- improving the transfer of information to secondary schools.

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