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Mr Grubb
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Dear Mr Grubb

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 07 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 four lessons and sessions run by the teaching assistant.

Context

French has been taught in class time since September 2007. It is taught to Years 5 and 6 by class teachers for one thirty minute session a week with some follow up during the rest of the week.

Achievement and standards

- Pupils are developing good listening skills. They listen to a variety of spoken French from DVDs, the teacher and a native speaker who is a

teaching assistant. They can understand most classroom instructions as well as the language of topics that they have covered so far.

- Pupils often listen to French and so develop good pronunciation as they are given plenty of practice in speaking. They are confident and have good fluency within the range of topics they have covered. They have good intonation when repeating phrases but some pupils have an anglicised pronunciation when reading aloud as they have not yet been systematically taught how to make the links between sound and spellings. The school is planning to adapt some of the techniques it uses for teaching phonics in English to the teaching of French.
- Pupils' writing is mostly copying and filling in gaps in worksheets they are given. They also write cards for special occasions and some have produced a poster. They write accurately but the range of tasks they are offered is limited.
- Pupils' cultural understanding is good. They know about some of the similarities and differences in festivals and traditional tales because they have access to a native speaker who is able to tell them about the French way of life.
- Pupils know that they are helped to learn a language by singing and through playing games. One girl also said that she felt more confident volunteering to answer in class when she was playing a game and felt that she was more able to participate in other lessons because of the confidence she had gained in her French lessons.
- Pupils are beginning to understand some of the rules about how language works. For example, they know that nouns can be masculine or feminine, and are beginning to see that this can affect adjectives of colour, because teachers encourage pupils to look at such aspects.
- Pupils are very positive about language learning. They say they think it is useful for jobs and also for when they move to secondary school.

Quality of teaching and learning in ML

- The school has done an audit of teachers' qualifications in a language and has discovered that several have qualifications beyond GCSE or are native speakers. The school has made a decision to employ a native speaker as a teaching assistant as she is then able to help staff with their knowledge of French and the culture of France.
- Teachers jointly plan lessons and are using ideas from the local authority training they have attended. They also select ideas from commercial schemes to ensure that lessons are relevant to the needs of all the pupils. Planning is developing well as teachers grow in their confidence and understanding of effective primary language teaching techniques.
- Teachers are using a variety of resources and techniques such as songs, games and DVDs and they are constantly seeking to expand their repertoire. The teachers are beginning to use familiar stories such as 'The Three Little Pigs' and 'Puss in Boots' in French but this is an

area that the school has recognised it needs to develop to ensure that these texts are appropriately exploited.

- ICT is well used to support language learning. For example, one group used a French toy shop website to research what they could buy for 100 Euros and then produced a graph of the results. They have also had the opportunity to digitally record themselves performing a puppet show in French which allowed them to work from memory and to perfect their pronunciation and fluency.
- Assessment of pupils' performance is in its infancy. Teachers give pupils some verbal feedback in class about their oral work. The school is investigating different external schemes which would help give pupils a better idea of their achievements and what they need to do to improve.

Quality of curriculum

- The school introduced French in to the curriculum for all pupils in Years 5 and 6 and has a well developed plan to ensure that all pupils in Key Stage 2 will learn a language by September 2008.
- There are some links with other areas of the curriculum but most of the French is taught in a discrete 30 minute lesson with some reinforcement during registration and during 'early morning activities' which happen before formal teaching starts every day. The school is investigating other resources which might help it to embed languages in other subjects such as physical education (PE) and music.
- The scheme of work which the school has developed makes reference to the Key Stage 2 Framework but focuses mostly on oracy and intercultural understanding, with some aspects of knowledge about language and language learning skills. Reading and writing are beginning to be developed but are not yet well planned in to the scheme of work.

Leadership and management of ML

- The school has a very clear rationale for teaching languages and a carefully considered development plan which sets out how languages will be introduced across the whole of Key Stage 2 over a two year period. It has based the plan on the need to keep a balance between this initiative and others that it has introduced in the school. It has looked carefully at the training needs of staff and the resource implications and this has helped to ensure both quality and sustainability.
- Teachers are encouraged to attend training, most of which is run by the local authority and involves support for both language and methodology. This has had a positive impact in the short term but the school agrees that there is a need for this training to continue and has allocated its funds accordingly.

- The senior leadership team is carefully evaluating the impact of language learning on pupils and has sought the views of parents and governors to ensure that provision meets the demands of the local community.
- Planning for progression between Key Stages 2 and 3 is at a very early stage. The school is part of a consortium of local primary and secondary schools which is devising a joint approach to transition.

Implementing languages entitlement

- Implementing entitlement is good.
- The school has a very clear policy on language teaching and this is shared with both governors and parents.
- The senior leadership team has effectively planned and implemented the introduction of language teaching. The plan to roll out the teaching of French to all pupils in Key Stage 2 by September 2008 is well designed and includes appropriate training opportunities for staff and teaching assistants.
- Pupils speak and understand French well; teachers are exploring how best to teach reading and writing and how to include a wider variety of tasks.
- Assessment of pupils' performance is at an early stage and although pupils get feedback on their work in class, little of this is formally recorded. The school is investigating systems which can be used both internally and for transfer of information to secondary schools.

Inclusion

- All groups of pupils achieve well. Boys and girls are equally enthusiastic about language learning and participate well in class.
- Pupils with learning difficulties often take part in the songs and games and so are making good progress.
- Gifted and talented pupils are given opportunities to show what they can do in the extended role plays, such as the puppet show.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- developing a wider range of activities to support progress in reading and writing
- investigating ways of increasing the links with other areas of the curriculum such as PE and music
- continuing to support the professional development of staff, especially in Years 3 and 4.

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