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Mr R Ward
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Ward

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 29-30 January 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 pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of eight lessons.

The overall effectiveness of languages was judged to be outstanding.

Haygrove has been a specialist languages college for four years; it was re-designated in November 2007.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are outstanding.

- By the end of Key Stage 3 all pupils are working well above the nationally expected level. Those who have learnt French at primary

school make particularly rapid progress during Key Stage 3. In German and Spanish pupils also make excellent progress even though they have less time available. By the end of Key Stage 3 the vast majority are able to understand and use a range of tenses from memory. Pupils speak with confidence and have good pronunciation.

- In 2007, standards in Key Stage 4 were well above the national averages and achievement was outstanding in all three languages. Many more pupils achieved the very highest grades than would be expected nationally and pupils did significantly better in languages than in other subjects they took in the school. This was especially true for girls in all languages. In Spanish the results for boys were not quite as outstanding, although relatively few took Spanish to GCSE level.
- The department's assessment of pupils' progress indicates that current pupils in both Years 10 and 11 are on course to do at least as well as in previous years. Pupils listening and reading is well developed and they have plenty of practice in class, especially at listening. Pupils speak confidently and mostly have accurate pronunciation. They are keen to try to use the language with foreign language assistants and during visits and trips. Pupils with learning difficulties are more reluctant to participate in oral work but they do well in writing and listening.
- Coursework is well prepared and shows that pupils are able to use a range of structures and tenses accurately with some interesting idioms.
- Pupils are aware of the usefulness of learning a language and have good understanding of the culture of the country whose language they are studying because many take part in the trips and visits on offer.
- Pupils have excellent attitudes, they try hard even when they find work difficult and they work hard outside class time. They enjoy learning a language and think they are well taught; in a survey 60% of them said they would continue to learn a language into Key Stage 4 even if it were not compulsory.

Quality of teaching and learning in ML

Teaching and learning are good.

- Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and so provide a very good example for pupils to copy.
- Working relationships between staff and pupils are respectful and pupils behave very well. Pupils offer to help to each other willingly and sensibly. For example in one lesson a boy helped a girl to work out the meaning of a passage by getting her to focus on cognates and key words.
- Activities are well chosen; they are interesting and follow a logical sequence. More able pupils are expected to work from memory and to complete a lot of work. Pupils with learning difficulties tend to answer less in class and in some lessons, especially those where there are

fewer opportunities for pair work, they avoid contributing much to oral work.

- The pace of lessons is excellent; pupils are expected to complete a lot of work, especially in the shorter lessons.
- Pupils enjoy the games and competitions, for example in one lesson pupils had to work in groups and were very keen to be the first to work out a grammatical rule.
- Pupils make good use of the extra help that is available to them outside class time from teachers and the foreign language assistants. The assistants are used very effectively to help pupils prepare for the oral examination, and to tell pupils about life in their country.
- Pupils are prepared extremely well for examinations. Pupils appreciate the revision sessions and say that these help them to make good progress. There are good revision booklets for oral work and pupils are given sample answers recorded by a native speaker which they can listen to and use at home.
- Pupils sometimes use school laptops to improve their language skills and to find out information from the internet, for example when preparing a presentation. Some pupils in Key Stage 3 said that they would appreciate more opportunities to use computers in their language lessons but all pupils agreed that teachers use the interactive whiteboards effectively to help them to learn.
- Pupils are given very good feedback on their performance in Key Stage 4; they are aware of how they can improve their work and what grades they can expect. Pupils in Key Stage 3 felt that work was not always well marked and that there were inconsistencies between teachers. This was borne out by evidence from pupils' books.
- Teachers mostly use the foreign language for instructions in class so pupils develop good listening skills, although there was some variation in how much this was done across different classes.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is outstanding and has been enhanced by language college status.

- All pupils study French in Year 7. All pupils in Year 7 have also learnt Japanese for a term and are currently learning Chinese. In Years 8 and 9 they all do a second language which is either German or Spanish. In Year 9 some more able pupils are offered the opportunity to do all three languages. In Key Stage 4 all pupils must take at least one language and currently 17% do two. All are able to take extra languages after school and currently about ten pupils are studying three languages to GCSE.
- There are several other languages available for pupils to study after school, including Chinese, Japanese and Arabic.
- Almost all pupils from this school study for the GCSE and a small number do a language support course which the school is seeking to

accredit via Asset. Gifted and talented pupils in French are given the opportunity to enter the GCSE early and in 2007, all achieved A*- B grades. During Year 11 these pupils follow an AS course or can pick up another language if they choose.

- There are trips and exchanges for all languages which are well subscribed to and help pupils to develop their independence, their language skills and understanding of different cultures. Pupils are encouraged to set up pen-pal links and several maintain these during their time at school.
- Pupils get the opportunity to see theatre productions in the language both on and off site, which they enjoy.
- There is a foreign language assistant for each language and they work with pupils to improve oral and written skills.
- Links are made with other subject areas, such as the work being done by the foreign language assistants with the geography department to enhance the geography curriculum but there are few links within languages to other subjects.
- The school has been involved in training local primary teachers and teaching primary pupils so there is a good understanding of what pupils have achieved. The staff have begun to adapt their Year 7 curriculum to ensure that pupils move quickly through the topics but as yet the plans to support those who have not learnt a language at primary level are less well developed.
- The school supports the teaching of languages in the special school, and are planning for pupils to be able to take the ASDAN award.
- The school is working towards the International Schools Award (ISA) and involves many pupils in trips and visits abroad or contacts with other countries.

Leadership and management of ML

Leadership and management are outstanding.

- Results have risen consistently and significantly over the past three years because of a firm focus on this at both senior and departmental level. In German, for example results have risen by 36% over three years. In French they have risen by 15% and in all languages are well above average.
- Subject evaluation is rigorous and accurate. The school uses a range of methods to evaluate how they are performing including careful data analysis, use of an external consultant and seeking the views of pupils and parents. The department is constantly striving to improve, to try new things and to evaluate the effectiveness of everything it does.
- The school analyses its results carefully and takes action whenever needed. For example it identified a need to improve the quality of teaching in German and the need to focus on improving pupils' reading skills in French. Both of these areas have been addressed effectively.

- The department is very well supported by senior managers who use the school's language college status to drive up standards both in the language and in other subjects by sharing expertise. The department leads the way for others in the school, such as in its approach to subject evaluation.
- The department works well with other local schools, including local primary schools. The school is a lead school for the Key Stage 3 Strategic Learning Networks and has chosen to focus on improving motivation as this is an area of strength in this school. There are also very strong links with the local special school where pupils, who are taught French by staff from this school, are making very good progress.

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

The school exceeds the benchmarks.

The development of reading skills

Reading skills are well developed.

- Pupils are aware of different strategies for understanding texts, such as using cognates and the context to provide a clue. In both a French and a German lesson the teacher made this very explicit by asking pupils to say how they had worked out the meaning of some words.
- Pupils generally have good pronunciation when reading aloud as teachers make sure that they explain how sounds are related to the written word. Pupils are mostly well aware of the rule about final consonant in French, for example.
- Pupils have access to dictionaries when they need them and they use them regularly in Key Stage 4.
- Pupils use texts, such as the one they were reading about environmental problems, to produce their own spoken or written work.
- There are some books and magazines which pupils can read for pleasure and this occasionally forms part of a lesson but there is a lack of variety of texts available for pupils to read.

Inclusion

Inclusion is good.

- Staff know pupils well and so plan lessons which meet the various needs and interests of their pupils effectively.
- Pupils with learning difficulties are well supported with extra help always available to them beyond the lessons, including through the language assistants. In some lessons they are given worksheets which

have been specially adapted for them. Nevertheless there are times when they do not take part in oral work as much as they might.

- Higher achieving pupils are given challenging work and are expected to work at a very fast pace.
- Support for pupils with English as an additional language is good as they are given extra support in English as well as support during language lessons, so they make rapid progress in both. They are encouraged to take a qualification in the other languages they speak.
- Gifted and talented pupils are given the opportunity to take the GCSE early, with those who do so gaining very high grades, and to begin an AS course or to learn another language.

The impact of the language specialism on the college and community beyond that which is included above.

- Pupils said they chose this school because of its focus on languages.
- Languages are a high performing department in the college and the language college director is a member of the senior management team in order to help share good practice across the school.
- The school supports local primary schools to enable them to teach primary languages, working with seven local primary schools. It provides training and resources, including the use of foreign language assistants. The school takes an active part in the Local Authority county primary languages forum.
- The college has good links with other local secondary schools, including the special school and the local college of further education. The school has information that approximately ten per cent of pupils in each language goes on to do Advanced level work.
- The school runs a summer school for pupils from local primary schools with about 25 per cent of the intake attending these sessions.
- Adult evening classes are run in French, Spanish and Italian and are well attended.
- Support staff are well deployed to ensure that visits run smoothly and that communication with parents is effective.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- improving the consistency of some aspects of the teaching such as the marking of pupils' work, the use of the foreign language to explain tasks and the opportunities for pupils to do oral work in pairs
- continuing to work on developing effective ways of transferring information about pupils' prior language learning and especially improving the support for pupils who enter the school with no prior language learning
- continuing to explore ways to encourage pupils to read extended texts from a variety of sources.

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. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Joanna Peach
Additional Inspector