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Mrs J Joule
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Dear Mrs Joule

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 1 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 two lessons.

Context

French is taught in all year groups to all children from Reception to Year 6.

Achievement and standards

Overall progress made by the pupils is good.

- Children listen very well and respond promptly and appropriately to the teacher's instructions and questions in French, for example when

playing games, participating in action songs and responding to greetings.

- They recall words from previous sessions well.
- Their pronunciation and intonation is very good.
- Children are beginning to identify patterns in the language from text.
- They are keen to speak and participate in oral activities; all children hold short conversations in French with varying degrees of support, developing social as well as language skills. However the range of language is limited.
- All children are keen to participate in speaking and singing activities in lessons and view learning languages not only as an important skill but also as fun.
- All children are very excited about their current language learning and are keen to learn more. They enjoy learning songs and playing games but say they would like more opportunities to practise outside the French lesson and would like to do more speaking in the language.

Quality of teaching and learning in ML

- Lesson planning is good, with engaging activities and resources, so that children build effectively on previous learning.
- The subject knowledge of teachers teaching languages is good. Children benefit from very good role models and their speaking and listening skills are well developed as a result.
- New language is presented very clearly using visuals and mime and actions so that children rapidly understand and use it successfully themselves.
- They enjoy speaking activities and they say they would like to do more of this. Opportunities for them to do this for real purposes, to give and gather information, are limited at present.
- Lessons are conducted mainly in English; opportunities are missed for instance to challenge higher attaining pupils to interpret instructions and some unfamiliar language for others and so develop higher order listening skills. Lower attaining pupils and pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported and are able to participate fully alongside their classmates.
- Opportunities to celebrate pupils' own knowledge of languages other than English are missed and intercultural understanding is underdeveloped although the school has plans to develop links with schools in France through the language college.
- Teachers monitor individual children's learning informally and give lots of praise; they have a very good idea of how well children are doing.
- Assessment procedures are good; they are beginning to involve children in evaluating their own work through 'can-do' statements; and tracking their progress. They provide a good basis to ensure continuity and progression in the next stage in learning.
- There is scope to develop the reading of short texts for pleasure and to increase children's range of language in speaking and writing.

- The use of ICT to support and extend learning is underdeveloped.
- Poems and short stories are used effectively to enhance children's learning, to extend their range of vocabulary and to enable pupils to identify patterns in the language.

Quality of curriculum

- Children have regular weekly half hour sessions for learning languages and class teachers use French, for example, in calling the register, counting rhymes and to practise songs. Pupils say they would like more opportunities to practise what they have learned outside the French lesson so that they could progress more quickly in the French lessons themselves.
- Opportunities to celebrate children's achievement in languages through assemblies and languages days are limited at present.

Leadership and management of ML

- There is a very clear rationale for the introduction of languages into the school. Schemes of work are linked to the Languages Framework for Key Stage 2 but are limited in scope.
- You and the governors provide very strong support and modern languages are included in the school development plan.
- The subject coordinator and you monitor progress.
- The school makes good use of local networks for training.
- Links with the local language college are effective in providing training but plans to ensure continuity and progression on transfer to the high school are at the early stages of development.

Inclusion

- This is a strength.
- All children are involved in learning French, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities.
- There is a collective determination to make the initiative successful.
- Both boys and girls are keen to learn languages.

Implementing languages entitlement

- This is good. The school has developed an effective model of languages delivery from Reception to Year 6 and a good rationale for it.
- All children learn French and they achieve well across all four skills.
- Teaching and learning are good. However, the use of information communication technology (ICT) is underdeveloped.
- Children' progress in languages is assessed and children evaluate their own progress. However this is an overview and the four skills are not assessed separately.

- Children have very positive attitudes towards their learning with no differences between boys and girls or children from different groups
- Languages features in school improvement planning and the Head teacher and governors strongly support languages
- Languages achievement is monitored; effective arrangements for the transfer of assessment information to the receiving high school are in the early stages of development.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- increasing opportunities for pupils to use the language for real purposes, to give and gather information
- increasing opportunities for children to read for pleasure
- developing the use of ICT to support and extend pupils' learning
- ensuring that childrens' experience of other languages and cultures is celebrated and shared with others.

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

Judith Tolley
Additional Inspector