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Mr Smith  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Smith

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 11 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 has been taught to pupils in Year 6 since 2003 when the school became involved in the Local Authority (LA) Pathfinder project. In 2004, Spanish was introduced for pupils in Year 4 with support from the neighbouring language college secondary school. Since 2005, Spanish has been taught to pupils in Years 3 and 4, and French to pupils in Years 5 and 6.

## Achievement and standards

- From their starting points, pupils achieve well overall.
- They make good progress in their speaking and listening because this is prioritised. They are confident in their spoken work and their pronunciation is good. Pupils listen carefully to others, evaluate the pronunciation of their peers and self-correct their own pronunciation.
- They also make good progress in reading as a result of work based on well-known children's stories. For example, pupils in a Year 5 French lesson were enjoying a variety of activities based on their reading of *Le Petit Chaperon Rouge*.
- Achievement in writing is satisfactory because opportunities for pupils to develop and practise their ML writing skills are more limited.
- Intercultural understanding is good. For example, pupils in a French lesson in Year 6 were able to compare their school life with that of children in France. Pupils' cultural development is good because staff work hard to promote respect for all the languages spoken within the school community.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning ML are very positive, and boys and girls are equally well motivated. Pupils listen attentively throughout the lessons and their behaviour is outstanding.
- Pupils who find learning more difficult are well supported and as a result they make similar progress to their peers. However, work is not always sufficiently challenging enough for more able pupils and those who speak other languages already.
- Pupils are very clear why it is important to learn a language to prepare them for the next stage in their education and for their future lives.

## Quality of teaching and learning in ML

- The class teachers teach the foreign language and one of them is the subject coordinator. Teachers' subject knowledge is satisfactory and improving. They have a good understanding of ML teaching methodology and use a successful range of strategies to support learning, to motivate pupils and make language learning enjoyable for all pupils so that they achieve well.
- Pupils enjoy the good variety of interesting activities which teachers plan for them to do. One pupil said, 'I like learning songs - number songs, good morning songs and playing bingo!'
- Information and communication technology (ICT) is used very well to support learning.
- Systems to check up on how well pupils are doing are not yet in place to support teachers in planning the next steps in pupils' learning, especially for more able pupils. Pupils' work is marked regularly, but marking does not make clear to pupils what they should do to improve their work.
- Attainment at the end of Year 6 is recorded and the LA takes on the responsibility of sharing this information with the secondary schools to which the pupils transfer.

## Quality of curriculum

- There is an effective model of delivery of languages in Key Stage 2. The rationale is to provide an early start which will develop pupils' language skills in two foreign languages.
- The school aims to develop an enthusiasm for language and for future language learning and to make the international dimension an integral part of the curriculum.
- Teaching methods are firmly rooted in the primary curriculum. They focus on active, enjoyable learning using physical response, storytelling, games, songs and role play.
- Pupils have very good attitudes and enjoy these activities and as a result their self-confidence grows.
- Video resources enable language to be presented using native speakers.
- Provision for listening, speaking and reading is good and pupils make good progress in these skills.
- Intercultural understanding is also developed well. The school has links with schools in Spain and France as well as a more recently established link with a Czech school.
- Provision is 40 minutes per week. Class teachers reinforce learning informally during the week. For example, pupils in Year 3 were using Spanish while the teacher was taking the register.
- Through links with the local Specialist Language College and with local primary schools, ML is enriched with themed days, such as the popular French shopping experience.
- The school is aware of the new QCA schemes of work, but has not yet planned for their use.

## Leadership and management of ML

- Leadership and management of ML are good. Leaders have established a clear rationale for ML and a shared vision amongst the staff. As a result, pupils achieve well.
- Senior and middle leaders have a good awareness of the school's strengths and areas for development in ML. Priorities for development are identified in the school improvement plan.
- The coordinator has attended training courses in the UK and abroad.
- Teachers have good access to training to develop good ML teaching strategies, as well as their knowledge of the languages being taught. Opportunities to use support networks amongst local primary and secondary schools are used well.
- However, the subject coordinator is not yet involved in monitoring the quality of teaching and learning.
- Governors are supportive, committed and take an active interest in ML in the school. They are aware of their role in holding the school to account for pupils' achievement in ML.

## Implementing languages entitlement

- Progress towards implementing languages entitlement is good.

## Inclusion

- This is good. All pupils in Key Stage 2 are included in language learning.. Additional adults are used well to give in-class support to pupils who find learning difficult so that they make good progress.
- More able pupils and some pupils who already speak languages other than English are not always set sufficiently challenging work to do.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- increasing opportunities for pupils to develop their ML writing skills so that all pupils make good progress in French and Spanish writing
- ensuring that ML assessment systems are in place and used to sharpen pupils' knowledge of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve; and to set suitably challenging work, especially for more able pupils.

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

Madeleine Gerard  
Additional Inspector