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Mr G Millinship
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Millinship

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 13 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' portfolios, observation of one lesson, a Year 3/4 performance and the after-school French Club.

Context

Up until this year there has been some experimentation with teaching primary languages. The local specialist language college (SLC) has supported the school in different ways. French was taught to Year 6 in 2005-06 and to Year 4 in 2006-07 by a French teacher from the SLC. It is now being taught to all Year 3 pupils by the same external teacher but the classroom teacher is also developing her expertise in order to teach Year 4 in 2008-09 and to take on the role of co-ordinator.

Achievement and standards

- From early starting points Year 3 pupils are making good progress.
- They listen attentively and respond well. They are confident to 'have a go' and take risks which are the marks of good language learners.
- Their pronunciation and intonation are mostly good because they have such a good role model in their teacher who speaks French during much of the 45 minute lesson.
- They are beginning to develop sound spelling links but this is still in its infancy.
- Many pupils showed that they could recognise the words of a song on screen and on cards. So far, writing has not been developed.
- They showed some understanding of masculine and feminine and that there are different systems in different languages with two boys bringing up similarities and differences with Arabic and Gujarati.
- They understand a little bit about France; they know very well and were very articulate about why it is important to learn new languages.
- Pupils are exceptionally well behaved and responsive when learning a language and they say that they enjoy it a lot.
- They are very aware of the variety of home and heritage languages that are spoken between them but say that they are not used a lot in different ways in lessons in school.

Quality of teaching and learning in ML

- The external teacher from the local SLC is adapting her methodology to the primary classroom well. She is aware of the different approaches needed. Her subject knowledge is very good.
- Lesson planning to achieve the learning objectives set is good.
- Pupils really like the good variety of activities to practise new language.
- Pupils' experiences as speakers of different languages could be drawn on more to make comparisons and develop knowledge about language.
- Information communication technology (ICT) is used to engage learners well via the use of the interactive whiteboard and DVDs; it is not yet used by pupils to develop their language learning. The school has plans in place to purchase laptops for classes next year and so this will become a more viable option.
- Pupils say they learn about how well they are doing through the plenary sessions in lessons and in one class pupils are just beginning to work on 'can do' statements.
- The class teacher is developing her expertise through attendance at local authority (LA) run training and through some observation of and team teaching with the SLC teacher as well as attendance at various professional development events such as the regional primary languages conference and networking groups.
- However, she is not able to observe every lesson because they are run in preparation and planning time, but says that through discussion and

looking at the scheme of work she is able to follow up on pupils' lessons during the week.

Quality of curriculum

- There is a good allocation of time on the curriculum: Year 3 pupils study French for 45 minutes a week with some extra work during class time such as during registration.
- During the inspector's visit all Year 3 and 4 pupils gave a performance to the school which had been performed for the community the evening before. One third of the performance was in French. This was an excellent and meaningful celebration of what pupils knew and could do in French which was thoroughly appreciated by the audience.
- The external scheme of work follows the recommended areas of language learning for Key Stage 2; it promotes creativity and contributes to pupils' enjoyment. It is not adapted by the school as much as it could be to set learning in a communicative context in lessons.
- There is an after school French Club run by the SLC teacher which a group of upper Key Stage 2 pupils attends this year. The session observed was very lively and well taught. The SLC also runs taster days.
- Display in school and in the classroom reflects some of the work pupils are doing in French and introduces them to written words and text, for example, for numbers and colours.

Leadership and management of ML

- The senior leadership team (SLT) under your new direction is very committed to developing language learning in the school.
- The rationale for the introduction is sound. It is underpinned by the training and resources which are being provided by the LA.
- The development of French features in the school's self evaluation but its impact on learners' achievement and personal development has not yet been evaluated.
- There is a draft subject development plan which takes the subject forward to full entitlement in 2010. Its success criteria are not yet sharply based on pupils' achievement.
- The SLT has planned monitoring and evaluation of its languages provision in the summer term to inform development planning and from then on they feature as part of the school's monitoring cycle.
- It is also very aware that formal pupil assessment needs to be built in and that transfer to secondary schools must be tackled.
- Next year, if the SLC Partnership is renewed, it is planned that Year 3 will continue to learn French with the external teacher, Year 4 with the class teacher, and Year 5 with a 'newly trained' class teacher, thus ensuring timely progress towards entitlement in Key Stage 2.

- The SLT sees the development of languages linked inextricably to the school's Creative Partnership bid for 2008-09, developing the two integrally across the school. It is also working towards setting up a link in France.
- Teaching and learning French has now excited different members of staff who would like to attend booster classes and be involved.
- The SLT is very supportive of the professional development needed to take forward language learning.

Implementing languages entitlement

- Implementing entitlement is satisfactory.
- All pupils in Year 3 are learning French and the school is working towards an effective model of delivery for all Key Stage 2 pupils.
- Teaching and learning overall are good.
- ICT is used to enhance language learning by the teacher but it is not yet used by pupils.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes towards learning a new language.
- Pupils get oral feedback in lessons on how well they are doing but assessment is at a very early and informal stage, as is monitoring and evaluation of lessons.
- The school does not yet make systematic use its knowledge of pupils' linguistic backgrounds to promote and develop their language learning.
- Planning for language development features in the school development planning.

Inclusion

- No pupil is excluded from learning a language.
- A teaching assistant worked very helpfully with a group of lower attaining pupils to ensure they made progress.
- Boys and girls are equally motivated to learn French.
- Differentiation by outcome is planned into lessons, which, at this stage of learning, is satisfactory.
- Almost all pupils have at least one home or heritage language, and can speak and write English. As such, they have a rich background of language learning on which to build; this is not yet drawn on sufficiently to develop their knowledge about language and language learning strategies.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring that definitive plans are in place for 2008-09 in time to provide effectively for Years 3 -5
- ensuring that where possible the Year 3 class teachers are more involved in the French lessons leading up to next year's provision

- making more use of pupils' home and heritage languages in lessons and beyond to celebrate the richness of their backgrounds and develop their knowledge about language.

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

Pam Haezewindt
Her Majesty's Inspector