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Mrs C Orrell
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Dear Mrs Orrell

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 5 June 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 parts of two lessons.

Context

French has been formally taught to pupils in Year 3 since 2006 and to pupils in Year 4 since 2007. Pupils in Year 5 also benefit from some teaching of French and those in Year 6 receive fortnightly sessions from a teacher from a local high school.

Achievement and standards

- The progress made by pupils in lessons was satisfactory overall.
- Pupils have a sound understanding of basic French grammar and are steadily increasing their vocabulary. In a Year 5 class, for example, pupils learned new phrases about the weather.
- Pupils are well behaved in class. They listen well and understand the French they are taught.
- Their confidence in speaking varies. In one lesson, pupils were very keen to answer simple questions and to demonstrate what they had learned. They spoke assuredly and with enthusiasm. However, pupils' pronunciation is underdeveloped.
- Writing is at a very early stage of development. Pupils in Year 5 have some opportunities to complete worksheets and to copy-write simple sentences.
- Pupils have some opportunities to develop their reading skills. Pupils read songs from interactive whiteboard presentations and older pupils are able to read phrases and sentences on worksheets.
- The learning of languages has a positive impact on pupils' personal development and well-being. They enjoy learning French.
- Pupils have a suitable understanding of how learning a language can benefit them on holidays and in secondary and further education. Some are aware of how languages can enhance their future employment prospects.
- Pupils' intercultural awareness, such as knowledge about where French is spoken in the wider world, is underdeveloped.

Quality of teaching and learning in ML

- Teachers are secure in their use of primary methodology and applied this well in lessons to enhance the teaching of French and to motivate pupils.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is satisfactory but their pronunciation is underdeveloped. Nonetheless, pupils in one class were appropriately corrected on some of their pronunciation.
- The quality of lesson planning varies: at its best, it is detailed and identifies clearly succinct learning objectives for the lesson as well as how the needs of pupils of different abilities will be met.
- Additional adults work well to support pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.
- Information and communications technology is used appropriately by teachers, mainly to introduce pupils to French songs. On one occasion video-conferencing with a local high school had been imaginatively used to give pupils opportunities to listen to and converse with a native French speaker.
- Assessment and recording of pupils' progress is informal and pupils are unclear about how well they are doing. Not all written work completed by older pupils is marked. However, in one lesson, the plenary session

was well used to recap and reinforce new learning and to assess how well pupils had learned new phrases.

- A range of other activities, such as competitive games to reinforce knowledge about numbers and key phrases are well used in lessons to support and reinforce learning. These maintain pupils' interest well.
- There is satisfactory use of the target language, but some opportunities to use French are missed, such as the use of praise words and questioning by teachers, and repetition by pupils of new phrases.
- In one lesson, resources were appropriately differentiated to meet the needs of learners of different abilities, including the more able.
- There are supportive displays in classrooms which emphasise key words and phrases and numbers.

Quality of curriculum

- The time devoted to languages in Years 3 and 4 of about half an hour a week is appropriate, although this is not always regularly adhered to.
- The curriculum model chosen for the delivery of languages, namely by class teachers, is sound. This allows teachers to reinforce learning at other times during the week. Firm plans exist for the rolling introduction of formal language teaching in Years 5 and 6 supported by additional input from several local high schools.
- Activities meet the needs of learners. Good provision was made in one class for learners of different abilities.
- The interim scheme of work is brief and is beginning to be linked to a commercial scheme. Assessment opportunities are not yet identified in the scheme of work.
- There is a range of suitable reinforcement activities in use, such as opportunities for pupils to answer the register in different languages, the use of French house point stickers and the singing of birthday songs in assembly.
- French is beginning to spread into other parts of school life, such as the 'seaside café' role play area in Year 2, where pupils have been introduced to basic numbers and phrases which they recalled with enthusiasm.
- The language curriculum is enriched by visits from two local secondary schools which work with older pupils.
- The school also utilises well the home and heritage languages of pupils with English as an additional language to show the usefulness and importance of languages to other learners.

Leadership and management of ML

- You are very supportive of the introduction of languages to the primary curriculum and careful thought has also been given to how language teaching can be sustained. A written policy for the teaching of ML has yet to be developed.

- The rationale for introducing a modern language is well-founded. Careful consideration has been given to the choice of language to be taught. This process included taking into account the strengths of the teaching staff, pupils' future needs at secondary school and why planning, preparation and assessment time would not be used for languages teaching.
- The subject leader has attended training provided by local high schools and maintains links with a Local Authority (LA) consultant. Appropriate training opportunities have been identified for the new subject leader.
- The development of modern languages is included in the school improvement plan. Governors are supportive of the implementation of languages teaching and parents have been kept informed of developments.
- Monitoring and self-evaluation of the effectiveness of languages teaching and learning are at an early stage of development.
- Good links have been established with two secondary schools which aid pupils' transfer to secondary school.

Implementing languages entitlement

- The school is implementing languages entitlement in Key Stage 2 satisfactorily. The school has sound plans to extend languages teaching to all classes in Key Stage 2 by 2010.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring that the school's schemes of work identify assessment and recording opportunities as well as ensuring continuity and progression when languages teaching expands into Years 5 and 6
- providing training opportunities for teachers to strengthen their subject knowledge, including their pronunciation
- developing monitoring and self-evaluation in modern languages
- improving pupils' intercultural understanding by broadening the languages curriculum.

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

Michael McIlroy
Her Majesty's Inspector