

Alexandra House  
33 Kingsway  
London  
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404040  
F 020 7421 6855  
[enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)



24 June 2008

Mr M Vlahakis  
Headteacher  
Alumwell Junior School  
Primley Avenue  
Walsall  
WS2 9UP

Dear Mr Vlahakis

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 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 one lesson.

#### Context

At present French is taught to two of the three classes in Year 5. From September a further three classes in Years 3-6 will be involved. Pupils currently study French. But there are plans to trial Spanish and German as well as French in Year 3 next year. A Spanish club is also due to begin in September.

## Achievement and standards

- Pupils listen very attentively. They respond promptly and appropriately to familiar questions. They enjoy making up their own language games: for instance, sequences with missing components.
- They are keen to participate in oral work and are confident in speaking in French. Their pronunciation and intonation are good
- Pupils read short texts confidently; there is little influence of English sound systems evident in their reading of familiar text.
- They use simple glossaries and display well to check vocabulary.
- Pupils are able to work out the meaning of simple text by using their knowledge of other languages and context. They are beginning to recognise similarities and patterns and apply them to increase their range of language.
- Writing is largely accurate.
- Cultural understanding in French is in the early stages of development within the school but pupils have a good understanding of cultures other than their own: for example, with regard to the heritage languages within the school. They respect different cultures and the home languages of others within the school.
- They have a good understanding of how to learn languages. They recognise clues and similarities. They demonstrate high levels of concentration, consulting displays and prompts to help them achieve tasks.
- They know how well they are progressing, their strengths and the areas they need to practise more. They are regularly involved in self evaluation.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes towards learning languages. They have a good understanding of the importance of language learning. They say they enjoy languages, want to do more for more time, including after school.
- They are beginning to use languages creatively. They are involved in role plays for example they thoroughly enjoyed playing customs officers. There is, however, scope to develop this further: for instance, through more opportunities to participate in pair work rather than just performance in front of the class, and adapting or telling stories.

## Quality of teaching and learning in ML

- The teacher's subject knowledge is good. Pupils benefit from a good role model and, as a result, listening skills are well developed. Lessons are conducted effectively in French. Good planning with well sequenced manageable learning steps enable pupils to build effectively on previous learning. New language is presented clearly so that pupils rapidly understand and use it themselves but there is scope to develop more supportive questioning to enable all pupils to respond successfully.

- Information and communication technology (ICT) is used to good effect to enhance learning: for example, the interactive whiteboard is used effectively to present new language and pupils are able progress at their own pace, recapping work covered or extending their learning through access to interactive programs at school and at home.
- The school have been proactive in finding appropriate training and this has been effective in developing methodology.
- Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported by teaching assistants in lessons. The system of assessment used is based upon the Languages Ladder but is in the early stages of development. Pupils are involved in self and peer assessment. Self assessment sheets at the end of each unit are kept in their records of achievement.

### Quality of curriculum

- Pupils in Year 5 study French for 40 minutes per week. They also use French for the register and incidentally during other lessons when appropriate. It is enough but there is scope to split up the sessions into smaller parts from time to time.
- The emphasis is upon speaking and listening. Pupils are confident language learners; all feel they can succeed as a result. Good use is made of games and songs. These engage pupils' interest and they are keen to participate. Good use is also made of text, enabling pupils to spot patterns and reinforce learning.
- Teaching expertise is being developed; a group of enthusiastic teachers is currently undergoing training in languages methodology in order to deliver languages next year. They are also keen to learn languages themselves.
- The school celebrates other languages across the curriculum particularly in religious education but more could be done to develop this within languages specifically.
- The schemes of work are based on the Key Stage 2 Framework and the QCA schemes of work and adapted to meet the needs of the school.
- They are adapted effectively to meet the needs of all learners and take account of different learning styles but there is scope to provide more opportunities for pupils to use the language themselves and for real purposes.

### Leadership and management of ML

- Leadership and management of modern languages are excellent.
- You have given strong and enthusiastic support for the introduction of language learning. Languages are included in school improvement planning and self evaluation processes. Governors are very supportive; parents have been consulted and are also very supportive.
- Monitoring is routine as part of whole school policy. All teachers due to teach languages next year are fully involved in planning and the

languages coordinator is developing ways of monitoring within the subject area. The National Centre for Languages (CILT) and regional networks are used well. Links with a local high school and language college are being developed as well as with a college locally which is also being used to share ideas across the region and to provide networking facilities. This is at the very early stages of development.

- The school has identified appropriate training and continues to do so. There are plans to investigate how the local language college can help. The first local network meeting is planned for later this term.
- Links with receiving high schools have yet to be fully developed in languages.

### Implementing languages entitlement

- Despite only Year 5 studying French at present, entitlement is good because languages feature strongly in school improvement planning.
- There is careful monitoring and evaluation of provision for and achievement in languages and careful analysis of the achievement of different groups.
- Detailed plans are already in place for all year groups in Key Stage 2 to learn a language in September.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- increasing opportunities for pupils to use the language informally and creatively in lessons
- developing opportunities for pupils to read for pleasure
- developing links with the receiving high school and local networks.

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