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Mr A Beaumont
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Beaumont

Ofsted subject survey: identifying good practice in modern languages

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and for the help of your staff and students, during my visit on 04 July 2008 to look at your 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 without their consent.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included interviews with staff, students and a range of visitors and observation throughout the day.

Features of good practice observed

- The Teach a Friend a Language (TAFAL) day is a rich event, with participating students demonstrating high levels of enthusiasm for, and commitment to, languages. The pairs of students worked to develop high quality dialogues and clearly enjoyed the process of sharing a language. The 'peer teachers' spoke about how they had discovered more about their home language by modelling and explaining it to their friends. The 'learners' talked about the insights they gained into culture, as well as language. The performance of their dialogue on-stage demanded significant courage; the growth in their confidence and self-esteem was tangible.
- Their role in 'marketing' their language and culture to the circulating judges was perhaps even more demanding. From what was often a shy start, the pairs gradually began to take the initiative: stopping judges, offering their food wares to be tasted and explaining the significance of

the artefacts on the table. This experience enabled them to develop rapidly their interpersonal skills and gain in self-confidence and self-esteem as the day progressed. Another visible outcome was their growing social confidence in taking turns to visit other tables, and talking to young people from other schools.

- The students of the host school, as well as forming a number of pairs, also made gains in their personal development through the day. Some acted as very efficient stewards for visitors and others performed on stage during the plenary events which punctuated the dialogue performances. High quality music and drama from a range of cultures added a further dimension to participants' intercultural awareness.
- The impact of the initiative has reached beyond the host school and beyond the July TAFAL day. Teachers from the 14 invited schools spoke of the excitement the event – and, importantly, the preparation for it – had generated. They felt that TAFAL enabled home and heritage languages to take a starring role, raising their status within each of the participating schools. They ensured that the preparatory phase generated publicity within their school prior to the TAFAL day, and described how they would disseminate information about the day following this event. One secondary teacher, whose school has participated this year for the first time, has run a blog where she has logged the process from the outset and invites all those in the school community, and beyond, to contribute. Teachers involved were universally positive about the initiative and felt that it had boosted the profile of languages within their schools, as well as providing invaluable opportunities for their selected students who were attending.

Leadership and management of ML at Woodbridge High School

- A monitoring visit to the school in autumn 2007 identified many strengths but concluded that progress in the subject in recent years had been hindered by severe staffing difficulties.
- Over the course of this present year, school leaders have appointed an impressive subject leadership team and ensured stable staffing overall.
- A number of other appropriate strategies have been put in place, which have the capacity to bring about further rapid improvement in languages provision in 2008-09.

As I explained, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority and will be published on Ofsted's website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection. Thank you again for the opportunity to attend and participate in your TAFAL day.

Yours sincerely

Anne Feltham
Her Majesty's Inspector