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Mr D Dixon  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Dixon

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 18 November 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

Bowbridge is a very large Primary school. French has been taught for five years in Key Stage 2. There have been a series of staffing changes in the last eighteen months which have resulted in instability for languages provision. Currently the co-ordinator is on maternity leave but due to return next term when the school's action plan for French 2008-09 is due to be put into operation. At the time of the visit, French is taught by a long-standing supply teacher and an unqualified teacher who is part of the administrative staff.

## Achievement and standards

- Year 6 pupils' recall of what they have been taught is rudimentary: they can give a few personal details such as name and age and where they live.
- Pupils' read from the whiteboard and worksheets and deduce meaning satisfactorily. They say they do not read any books but some look at website material. They are developing knowledge of gender.
- There are good examples of Year 4 pupils writing accurately using a model.
- Pupils have good attitudes towards learning languages and enjoy it.
- Their knowledge of why they are useful is limited.
- It is very apparent how the well-established French trip is important in developing their cultural awareness and knowledge about France.

## Quality of teaching and learning in ML

- Overall, teachers' knowledge and understanding of French are satisfactory.
- Too much English is spoken in lessons by teachers and there is too little expectation that pupils will respond in French. Pupils do not get enough practice with new language items. This has an adverse affect on pronunciation and on their ability to memorise and produce spoken language for themselves.
- There is good, active work with songs and games which pupils enjoy.
- Teachers are aware of pupils' individual needs but planning does not show this and some pupils are not drawn into lessons as much as others.
- Assessment is in its early stages. Formative assessment is being introduced in the form of 'can-do' statements and more summative assessment is under discussion.
- There has been no recent training for primary languages but some is planned with the local authority (LA) for early next term.

## Quality of curriculum

- Currently, Years 4, 5 and 6 study French. The staffing situation has curtailed Year 3 provision this year. Year 6 has a good time allocation of an hour a week. Years 4 and 5 have an hour a week for half a term each term. Again, this is a result of the current shortage of staff. This is not ideal, especially for retention. There is some follow-up by some class teachers but it is not systematic.
- A satisfactory scheme of work with progression across Years 4 to 6 has recently been drawn up. Plans for a more comprehensive Years 3 to 6 scheme are in the development plan. Teachers are aware of the Key Stage 2 Framework; the recent qualifications and curriculum authority (QCA) scheme of work has yet to be consulted.

- The well-organised annual trip to a French school provides good stimulation for learning French as well as for cross-curricular work. Pupils who have visited are extremely enthusiastic. The trip is also a source of material to support French. Pod-casting is used between the two schools.

#### Leadership and management of ML

- You have ensured that language provision has continued despite staffing instability.
- ML appears in the school's overarching 'Growth Plan' and there is a brief action plan for French for 2008/09 which highlights key priorities. The development of this awaits the return of the co-ordinator.
- You have monitored some teaching but not linguistic progression.
- Professional development for languages is not specifically written into the school's plans for improvement.
- Governors are committed to the continued development of primary languages.
- Secondary schools have not liaised with Bowbridge about their primary languages provision although Bowbridge has informed them and so there is no transfer of Year 6 information.

#### Implementing languages entitlement

- Implementing entitlement is satisfactory.
- The introduction of French is well-founded, based on the school's link with France.
- The school is working towards an effective model of delivery, seeking to recoup some of its momentum after its recent staffing issues.
- The inclusion of some of the strands on the Key Stage 2 Framework is rudimentary; for example: knowledge about language and language learning strategies.
- There is a satisfactory awareness of priorities for development.

#### Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- using more French to conduct lessons and providing intensive oral work for all pupils
- improving lesson planning to include matching work to different pupil abilities
- adding more detail to the French action plan about how key priorities are to be achieved, and including French as part of the school improvement plan.

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  
Specialist Subject Adviser for Modern Languages