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Mr R Gargan
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Gargan

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 20 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 one lesson.

Context

St Mary's is very small school with vertically streamed classes throughout. It began teaching Spanish in 2005/06 in conjunction with the local specialist language college (SLC). A member of staff there came into St Mary's to teach Spanish to Years 5 and 6 alongside the class teacher. In 2006/07 the class teacher took on the teaching of Spanish to Year 5 only and the external teacher taught Year 6. This continued until the current year when, with no prior warning, the SLC withdrew from teaching at St Mary's apparently due to the reduction in pupils St Mary's provides to the school. St Mary's has continued to teach Spanish to the mixed Year 5/6 class this term using the

expertise the class teacher built up the previous years and the materials the SLC provided. This is an interim solution whilst the school plans for the future.

Achievement

- Year 6 pupils' recall of simple questions and answers learned last year is good and Year 5 pupils were able to have a simple conversation after relatively little experience. They also understand instructions and directions well, as a game of 'Simon Says' revealed.
- They listen well. There is evidence of listening and showing understanding of simple sentences.
- They are able to read words and show understanding by matching.
- They can do simple maths in Spanish.
- Copying and writing using simple models is mostly accurate.
- They behave extremely well and have good attitudes to learning languages showing enjoyment in class.
- They think learning languages is valuable. Those spoken to could all cite very good reasons why they should learn a language, demonstrating a good level of maturity.
- However, they know little about the culture of the countries and communities that are Spanish speaking, nor do they demonstrate a lot of knowledge about language or language learning strategies.

Quality of teaching and learning in ML

- Year 5 pupils have learned Spanish for a relatively short time but have managed to learn how to have a simple conversation both seeking and giving information as well as understand numbers and instructions.
- Year 6 pupils are consolidating last year's work and are making less progress than they should because they need more differentiation and higher expectations planned into the lessons.
- There is insufficient Spanish spoken to conduct the lessons, for example: greetings, giving routine instructions, praise.
- Pupils' heritage languages are known and they are used to encourage knowledge about language from time to time but not systematically.
- Formative assessment is well established and pupils self and peer-assess well. A simple end of Year 6 assessment had been introduced by the SLC; this will need to be reviewed in the light of changes made to the curriculum.

Quality of curriculum

- Current provision is suffering from a delayed start due to the withdrawal of support from the SLC. Year 6 pupils are repeating some of what they have previously learned and find this a bit frustrating. However, they find some of the consolidation useful.
- Good provision of an hour a week is provided with some follow-up during other times.

- The programmes and activities planned have interested learners because Year 6 pupils are enthusiastic about what they have done previously and are keen to make progress. However, the programmes and activities do not align with the current Key Stage 2 Framework and the more recent qualifications and curriculum authority (QCA) schemes of work based on the framework. Consequently, the five strands¹ recommended in these documents are not planned for and provided for in lessons.
- There is a well-established after-school private French Club, which a good number of pupils attend, and have done so for a number of years. It has encouraged positive attitudes towards language learning.

Leadership and management of ML

- You are very supportive of language learning and want to ensure that it develops quickly and well to ensure entitlement for all Key Stage 2 pupils by 2010.
- To this end you have planned appropriately for this in the school development plan where it is a key issue, amending the plan to include alterations that need to be made given that the SLC is no longer involved.
- You have quickly contacted the local authority (LA) for support and guidance which is calendared shortly.
- The organisation of training for the class teacher of Years 3 and 4 is under discussion and she is also to attend a LA ML cluster meeting shortly.
- You monitored teaching and learning by the external teacher regularly last year and were satisfied that it was enthusing pupils in their language learning.
- The ML co-ordinator (Years 5 and 6 class teacher) is aware that schemes of work need to be amended to incorporate progression from Years 3 to 6 and that pupils' experience at St Mary's needs to be built on at the secondary schools they go to. Liaison with one school is about to begin.
- There are not yet enough resources; for example: for reading and developing intercultural understanding.

Implementing languages entitlement

- The school is working towards an effective model of delivery in Key Stage 2 with a clear rationale for introducing Spanish.
- Pupils in two year groups learn a language in Key Stage 2 and achieve well within the confines of what they are taught.

¹ *Oracy, literacy, knowledge about language, intercultural understanding and language learning strategies*

- There is little explicit teaching of reading or writing and work on intercultural understanding, language learning strategies or knowledge about language is underdeveloped.
- Formative assessment, however, is a strength recorded in pupils' progress booklets.
- The school is aware of different pupils' linguistic backgrounds but does not yet make systematic use to support and broaden pupils' language learning.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- increasing the use of the target language in the classroom
- planning to meet the latest Key Stage 2 Framework through the use of schemes of work which include all five strands of work recommended and amending assessment to match
- ensuring that each age group in a mixed age class is well catered for and makes equally good progress.

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