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Mrs B Haigh
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Dear Mrs Haigh

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 December 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 two groups of pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of two lessons.

Context

The teaching of French was introduced to all classes in Key Stage 2 in 2006 and is taught by two higher level teaching assistants (HLTAs).

Achievement

- Achievement is good. The progress made by pupils in both lessons observed was good. Pupils were able to demonstrate their prior knowledge before moving on to learn new concepts.

- Pupils' knowledge of vocabulary is developing well. They have many opportunities to write and speak new words.
- Pupils' listening and speaking skills are good. They listen carefully, respond to instructions in French and can answer questions with confidence. Older pupils can also ask questions of adults. Their good speaking skills reflect the strong emphasis placed by the school on oral work although on occasion a few opportunities to practise speaking were missed. Pupils' pronunciation is sound and they were receptive to teachers' interventions to improve this.
- Writing is developing well. Pupils have many opportunities to complete worksheets in French and Year 6 pupils have completed some extended writing in their books.
- Pupils have a good understanding of basic grammar. They are aware of the different genders, of singular and plural nouns and of accents. In one Year 4 lesson, pupils showed that they knew 'décembre', is written with an accent.
- Pupils' intercultural understanding is good overall. They can cite the main differences between British and French school life and have learnt about French figures from history, food, famous buildings and major cities.
- Pupils enjoy learning a language. They spoke enthusiastically of the challenge it offers them and of the different facts they learned about another country. Consequently, learning languages makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development and well-being.
- Pupils' understanding of why it is important to learn a language and of how it could benefit them in the future is not as developed as it could be.

Quality of teaching and learning in ML

- Teaching methodology is secure and offers pupils a range of activities in the areas of speaking, listening, reading and writing. Both of the lessons observed opened with opportunities for pupils to recall and consolidate previous learning. Useful links with other subjects are also drawn upon, such as the use of mathematical graphs in pupils' books and reminders in one lesson about punctuation such as question marks.
- Teachers make good use of the target language, using praise words, instructions and questions.
- Lesson plans follow the school's format and identify learning activities but could emphasise more clearly how pupils of differing ability are catered for.
- Teachers' subject knowledge and pronunciation are sound. Pupils are appropriately corrected on their pronunciation.
- Information and communication technology is well used in lessons. Visually interesting programs are used with interactive whiteboards to introduce new vocabulary, to give pupils experience of native French speakers and to teach aspects of geography about France. Pupils are

also able to use the interactive whiteboard confidently. For example, in one lesson, pupils listened to a description of the weather in areas of France and then manipulated weather icons on the screen to match the location with the corresponding description.

- Good use is made by teachers of the language skills of pupils whose first language is not English in order to extend pupils' knowledge about languages.
- An assessment procedure is well established. This records the level of effort that pupils in all year groups make in lessons and where some have made improvements in speaking. There is scope to develop this further to identify the progress pupils are making in each area of learning.
- Pupils' work is marked and is well presented, reflecting the pride they take in their work.
- Both girls and boys are enthusiastic learners and keen to demonstrate their knowledge of French.
- Some plenary sessions are well used to recap and embed learning.
- Some language learning strategies, such as cognates, are used to help pupils decode and understand new vocabulary. In one lesson, where a song was being introduced, the teacher discussed the similarity between 'forest' and 'fôret' to enable pupils to understand the context of the song.

Quality of curriculum

- The curriculum model chosen by the school whereby French is taught by two established and experienced HLTAs is effective and sustainable. As well as utilising the strengths of staff, it ensures continuity of learning for pupils from year to year.
- The school has developed good schemes of work that are well matched to pupils' interests and which draw on commercial resources. Schemes are checked against the Key Stage 2 Framework headings to ensure appropriate coverage. Improvements are made to the schemes following their review at the end of each year.
- Pupils spoken to during the visit appreciate and enjoy the wide variety of learning activities that the curriculum provides.
- The curriculum is well supported by a good range of varied and high quality resources. These include commercial schemes and worksheets, DVDs, CDs and computer programs, 'talking tin lids' and school produced games and activities for many topics.
- The time allocation of one hour per week for each class is good.
- The curriculum has been enriched by a visit from a French speaking theatre troupe which pupils enjoyed. This was also followed up in literacy work.
- The school library contains a good section of new and colourful French language books which pupils can browse and borrow.

- In terms of intercultural development, the curriculum has a strong focus on France but does not emphasise enough other areas of the world where French is spoken.

Leadership and management of ML

- The introduction of ML has been strongly supported by the senior leadership team and governors. A good level of resources has been allocated for the teaching of ML.
- The rationale for the successful implementation of ML is well founded and the school has drawn appropriately on the strengths of its staff.
- Subject leadership is good. It is shared between the two HLTAs who work well as a team. Their regular review of topics and the subsequent revision of schemes of work inform future planning. It also ensures that progression in learning is maintained as older year groups move into new learning and that topics are adapted if necessary to more closely match learners' interests.
- A policy for the teaching of ML has been drawn up. Self-evaluation in ML is satisfactory. Subject leaders have charted the progress made so far in introducing ML and broadly know the areas where they wish to develop further. This would benefit from a more formal development plan.
- At present arrangements for monitoring the effectiveness of teaching and learning are informal.
- Subject leaders have accessed much of the available training provided by the local authority (LA) and maintain good links with the LA officer with responsibility for developing ML. Good links also exist with the secondary school to which most pupils transfer and assessment information on pupils' effort in ML is passed on. Subject leaders have also sought to develop links with a language college in a nearby LA.
- The school has recently surveyed the views of parents and pupils on the effectiveness of ML and returns from a recent questionnaire showed very positive responses from both groups.

Implementing languages entitlement

- Implementing entitlement is good.
- All pupils in Key Stage 2 learn French and the model for its delivery is sustainable.
- The school's senior leadership has strongly supported and resourced well the introduction of ML.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- developing assessment procedures so that the school has a clearer picture of pupils' achievement in the different areas of ML
- strengthening pupils' understanding of the contribution languages can make to their future educational and employment prospects

- developing more formal monitoring of teaching and learning in ML.

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