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Mrs L Coates  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Coates

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 9 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 pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of two lessons and a rehearsal for a French fashion show.

Context

The primary school has a small unit for hearing impaired pupils. French was introduced in 2006 and has been gradually phased into all three classes in Key Stage 2.

## Achievement and standards

- The achievement of pupils is satisfactory. In the class lesson observed pupils made satisfactory progress.
- Pupils listen satisfactorily and most understand what they are being asked to do in French.
- Pupils' speaking skills are satisfactory but their confidence in speaking is variable. Older pupils are able to speak a few sentences in French. Their pronunciation is underdeveloped.
- Pupils listen satisfactorily and respond when asked to do so.
- Pupils' writing is at an early stage of development. They have a few opportunities to write French words on worksheets and to do some copy-writing. Older pupils in Year 6 have some opportunities to write more extensively.
- Pupils' reading skills are satisfactory. Pupils are learning to read French from worksheets, programs used on the interactive whiteboards and from high quality classroom displays.
- Pupils are developing a basic understanding of grammar. They know, for example, that nouns are either feminine or masculine.
- Both boys and girls enjoy learning French. Intercultural understanding is not as advanced as it could be at this age. For example, their awareness of where French is spoken in the world is limited. Nonetheless, learning French is having a positive impact on their personal development and well-being as it is helping to promote their understanding of the wider world.
- Pupils have a satisfactory understanding of how learning a language can be useful to their future academic and working lives. They cited its usefulness in airline and teaching jobs and when travelling or working abroad.

## Quality of teaching and learning in ML

- Teaching is satisfactory. In the Year 3/4 lesson observed, pupils' prior knowledge was revised and the overall pace of learning was adequate.
- Subject knowledge is very good and pupils are appropriately corrected on their pronunciation.
- There is good use of the target language. A wide variety of praise words is used as well as instructions and explanations.
- Teaching methodology is sound. Pupils are given appropriate opportunities to learn and repeat new vocabulary. There is scope to make more use of individual questioning, for example during the plenary session, to embed key learning points more securely, and ensure all pupils have understood them.
- Pupils learn some sound-spelling links. For example, in the Year 3/4 they learned how 'th' is pronounced in French using 'Bethlehem' as a relevant example. There is also some teaching about cognates. In the rehearsal session for the French fashion show, pupils were shown how

similarities between some words in French and English can be used to understand their meaning.

- Teaching assistants and class teachers support groups of learners in lessons.
- A satisfactory range of resources is used in lessons. In the Y3/4 lesson, flashcards, games, songs and quizzes were used to introduce new vocabulary although some activities lasted too long causing some pupils to lose interest. In the lesson in the hearing impaired unit, the interactive whiteboard was used to good effect to show pupils pictures of the Eiffel Tower and other landmarks in Paris.
- Planning is satisfactory but does not always indicate how the needs of different groups of pupils will be met and supported during lessons.

### Quality of curriculum

- The curriculum model used is appropriate and sustainable. A part-time teacher delivers weekly half-hour lessons to each class in Key Stage 2. Class teachers provide some follow up and reinforcement at other times in the week, for example by taking the register in French.
- Good provision is made by the school to ensure that hearing impaired pupils also learn French. Some receive French in the weekly class lesson and others are taught French by their class teacher in the hearing impaired unit.
- The time allocated for learning languages is suitable.
- A new commercial scheme of work has been adopted by the school. This matches the Key Stage 2 Framework headings and meets the needs and interests of learners. The school is in the process of adapting it to meet the requirements of mixed year classes.
- The curriculum is enhanced by some enrichment activities, such as the French fashion show, which make a satisfactory contribution to pupils' creativity and their enjoyment of languages. During the rehearsal of this, Year 6 pupils had opportunities to read aloud short texts.
- Currently, there are very few French books or magazines in classrooms or the library which learners can read for pleasure.
- There are supportive and colourful displays in classrooms with useful vocabulary to help learners.

### Leadership and management of ML

- You are very supportive of the introduction of languages to the curriculum. Careful consideration has been given to the choice of the curriculum model and its introduction. There are plans to extend the amount of time pupils are taught French.
- The rationale for teaching French is well-founded as French is the main language taught in the secondary schools to which most pupils transfer.

- The development of French is highlighted in the current school improvement plan. This is supported by a subject development plan and progress in developing provision in the language is also evaluated.
- Appropriate training has been identified and held for staff to enable them to understand the rationale behind pupils' entitlement to learn ML and how they can provide enrichment and reinforcement outside formal lessons in French.
- Governors are supportive of the introduction of French and have set aside resources for its development.
- A draft policy for ML has been prepared and it appropriately considers how hearing impaired pupils can be included in the provision for languages.
- Several staff have attended courses provided by the local authority to aid the introduction of the new scheme of work.
- The monitoring of teaching and learning in ML is at an early stage of development as are assessment procedures. There is scope to develop the latter so that the school has a clearer picture of pupils' progress and attainment in the subject and so that detailed information can be provided about their abilities in French to the secondary schools to which they transfer.

#### Implementing languages entitlement

- Implementing entitlement is satisfactory.
- All pupils in Key Stage 2, including those with hearing impairment, are taught French and are making satisfactory progress.
- Pupils have positive attitudes towards the learning of languages.
- The school's leadership is very supportive of ML.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- improving planning and the pace of learning in lessons
- improving pupils' intercultural understanding
- developing assessment procedures
- developing pupils' writing and opportunities for them to read for pleasure.

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