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Mr J Robinson
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Dear Mr Robinson

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 24 September 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 and observation of two lessons.

Context

Pupils in Year 4 currently learn French and have been learning French since the second term of Year 3 in January 2008. The current Year 3 will commence French in their second term, after Christmas in January 2009. The school chose French as the ML because teachers had most confidence in French and the school considered French to be the most sustainable language should current staff move on.

Achievement and standards

- From their starting points, pupils' achievement is good.

- Pupils listen attentively and respond accurately to familiar spoken words and short phrases, for example greetings and questions about their personal details. Boys and girls are equally well motivated and they enjoy demonstrating what they have learned in French to visitors as well as taking an active part in the lessons. For example, pupils in Year 4 were keen to perform short role plays and spoke with enthusiasm about the assembly they had organised the previous term to show the rest of the school what they had been learning.
- Their pronunciation and intonation are good because the teacher models this carefully, corrects mispronunciations and includes opportunities to hear native speaker recordings. For example, pupils in Year 4 were given good opportunities to practise raising their voice at the end of a question in French.
- Pupils are introduced to the written form of words and phrases systematically and as a result their reading skills are developing well. For example, pupils in Year 4 order words cut up on cards to form simple sentences. Pupils copy accurately when writing and their presentation in their French exercise books is painstaking. Pupils also fill in gaps on worksheets to practise simple phrases. During the inspection, some pupils were also motivated to write short greetings cards for the inspector and included drawings of food and animals labelled in French, reflecting their developing creativity. The teacher seizes opportunities to identify similarities/differences between French and English vocabulary and grammar, and discusses these explicitly.
- Pupils' pride in their achievements, the confidence with which they perform newly learned language in pairs and small groups, their positive attitudes to language learning and to the languages spoken by all members of the school community, reflect the positive contribution ML makes to pupils' personal development.

Quality of teaching and learning in ML

- Teaching and learning are good.
- The teacher's knowledge of the language is satisfactory and improving. Pronunciation is careful and accurate and the teacher speaks with confidence and also has the confidence to self-correct. The teacher has a good understanding of ML teaching methodology as a result of a successful local authority (LA) training course and uses an appropriate range of strategies to support learning, motivate learners and make language learning enjoyable for all pupils. Pupils' consistently positive attitudes reflect this.
- Good use is made of information and communication technology (ICT).
- Systems for measuring how well pupils are making progress are developing. Pupils' attainment in oral work is assessed at the end of the summer term and recorded, although this does not include any reading or written assessment. The school has included French in the end of year school report, although this evaluates participation and attitudes rather than achievement and attainment.

Quality of curriculum

- There is an effective model of delivery of languages in Key Stage 2 and a clear rationale for it. The rationale is to teach lifelong language learning skills that the pupils will be able to use in the future, to learn new language or to improve their competence in an existing language.
- Teaching methods are firmly rooted in the primary curriculum. They focus on active, enjoyable learning using storytelling, games, songs and role-play. The provision is well planned and takes good account of the Key Stage 2 Framework and its five headings.
- Provision is 45 minutes per week as well as additional opportunities to practise the language for example, during registration and physical education (PE).
- In the first year of ML teaching, the school used the qualifications and curriculum authority (QCA) scheme of work. Since then the school has purchased a published course and is following the scheme of work proposed by the course with a weekly topic and opportunities to review previous learning.
- The published scheme of work includes a variety of ICT resources which are used judiciously for teaching and learning, for example to model good pronunciation. Pupils in Year 4 enjoy using the children's BBC website to access French activities.

Leadership and management of ML

- Leadership and management of ML are good.
- Senior leaders are very supportive. Their commitment to commencing primary ML in good time for the 2010 deadline and the school's commitment to staff training reflect this.
- The governors are highly supportive, committed to helping the school to develop further and take an active interest in the introduction of ML at the school.
- The ML coordinator has received good LA support and has formed useful links with other local primary school ML coordinators which has helped strong motivation and self confidence to grow.
- You, the ML coordinator and the governors have established a clear and shared rationale for the sustainable introduction of ML at the school. As a result, pupils are achieving well over the short time they have been learning French. There is a good action plan for the formal introduction of ML in Key Stage 2, which includes informal opportunities for children in Reception and pupils in Year 1 to learn songs in French.

Implementing languages entitlement

- Implementing entitlement is good.

Inclusion

- All pupils are included in ML learning and no pupils are withdrawn for ML lessons. Some additional adults are also included in training for ML. As a result, all pupils are included well in ML lessons and make good progress.
- Additional adults contribute to ML lessons and their contribution to the learning of identified pupils is included on the plan. Additional adults support pupils who struggle with basic literacy and numeracy.
- However there are missed opportunities to ensure that all pupils are set consistently challenging tasks, particularly those who find language learning easy. Boys and girls are equally well motivated by the tasks they are set.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring that ML assessment systems are rigorous and used to plan the next steps in pupils' learning and to sharpen pupils' knowledge of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.

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

Madeleine Gerard
Additional Inspector