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Mrs Kwiatkowski
Headteacher
St Brendan's RC Primary School
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Dear Mrs Kwiatkowski

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 28 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, observation of three lessons and activities in the Reception class.

Context

Both French and Spanish have been taught to all pupils from 2005 until very recently when there have been changes in staff. At present Years 5 and 6 learn French and pupils from the Reception class to Year 4 learn Spanish.

Achievement and standards

- Standards are broadly in line with expectations in both languages. Pupils achieve well.
- Pupils are confident listeners and respond promptly and appropriately to familiar questions and instructions.
- Pupils' intonation and pronunciation are very good.
- They are able to match print with sound and meaning and writing is accurate.
- Currently there is little evidence of pupils identifying or applying patterns in the languages.
- Pupils have a good understanding of the different cultures in Spain and France and have a very clear understanding of why it is important to study modern languages.
- They have very positive attitudes towards learning modern languages. They particularly enjoy games and songs and feel that these activities help them to learn effectively.

Quality of teaching and learning in ML

- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and use a variety of strategies such as games, songs and the Interactive White Board to engage pupils.
- New language is presented clearly so that pupils rapidly understand and use it successfully themselves.
- Pupils are given frequent opportunities to practise as a whole group through repetition. However, opportunities for them to use the languages themselves, creatively or independently of the teacher, to gather and give information are much more limited.
- Teachers use white boards effectively to check progress and understanding in lessons.
- The target languages are usually used effectively in lessons. Pupils benefit from excellent role models and listening and speaking skills are well developed as a result. However, opportunities are missed to challenge the more able to interpret more complex language for others.
- Assessment procedures involve pupils tracking their own progress and they have a good understanding of how well they are doing. However procedures to record pupil progress in modern languages are at an early stage of development.

Quality of curriculum

- The curriculum currently ensures continuity and progression from Year 6 to Year 7 since French is now taught in Years 5 and 6 rather than Spanish, and the receiving High School provides French to pupils in Year 7.

- Information and communication technology (ICT) is used effectively by teachers and pupils in lessons but the resources for pupils to use ICT to consolidate and extend learning are still being developed.
- Qualifications and curriculum authority (QCA) schemes of work form the basis for planning but the time allocated to languages is short so that these schemes have to be considerably adapted to fit the time available. All pupils learn a language beginning in Reception and continuing to Year 6. Heritage languages are celebrated effectively.
- Although text is used effectively to reinforce learning, opportunities for pupils to read for pleasure are limited.
- Good links with the receiving high school exist and these links are being developed to ensure a smooth transition from Year 6 to Year 7 in languages.

Leadership and management of ML

- You and the senior leadership team are very supportive of modern languages.
- ML provision is monitored and evaluated alongside other subject areas and progress in ML is reported to governors.
- ML is included in the school's self evaluation and improvement planning processes.
- The school makes good use of local and regional networks to develop expertise and share good practice.
- There are good links with the receiving high school but arrangements for the transfer of information about pupils' progress in languages are in the early stages of development as are arrangements to ensure continuity and progression to Year 7 in the longer term.

Implementing languages entitlement

- Implementing entitlement is good
- There is an effective model of delivery of languages in Key Stage 2 and a clear rationale for it.
- All children in Key Stage 2 learn a language and they achieve well in at least listening and speaking. There is also some explicit teaching of reading, writing and intercultural understanding.
- Teaching and learning are well designed to engage all pupils' interest and to promote their ability and readiness to use the language.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes towards languages, and boys and girls are equally well motivated.
- Their progress in languages is assessed and recorded in at least listening and speaking, and they are aware of their progress.
- There is good provision for gifted and talented and pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities (LDD).

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- increasing opportunities for pupils to use the languages themselves both creatively and for real purposes
- increasing opportunities for pupils to read for pleasure
- reviewing the curriculum in order to ensure continuity and progression to Year 7 in the longer term.

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

Judith Tolley
Additional Inspector