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Dear Miss Meekley

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 03 February 2009 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 four lessons and the French Club.

Context

The school has taught French to a number of classes since 2003. Since 2007 it has been taught to all pupils in Key Stage 2.

Achievement

- The progress pupils made in lessons was good overall. Pupils have a good understanding of vocabulary and sentence structure. However, their knowledge of some aspects of basic grammar is still developing.
- Pupils' speaking skills are good. They are confident. Younger learners can readily name colours, numbers and recite the days of the week. Older pupils can ask and answer simple questions in sentences. In a Year 6 class, pupils were able to use their conversational skills in role play to buy and sell fruit. Their pronunciation is satisfactory and that of some pupils is good.
- Listening skills are developing well. Most pupils listen well to teachers, the foreign language assistant and to recordings of native speakers. They also listen carefully when their pronunciation is corrected.
- Pupils' reading is developing well. They have opportunities to read songs, phrases and sentences from interactive whiteboards, worksheets, flashcards, displays and computer programs.
- Writing is developing satisfactorily. Pupils complete worksheets and copy write French sentences. There is some independent writing by older pupils.
- Pupils' intercultural awareness is satisfactory. They know some of the countries where French is spoken and know a number of the key tourist sites in Paris and some major events in French history, such as the Revolution. Pupils also know that France presented the Statue of Liberty to the United States of America.
- Pupils have a satisfactory appreciation of the importance of learning a language. They understand how it could help them when travelling abroad on holiday and how learning a language could lead to careers in translating and as a tourist guide.
- Pupils are generally well behaved in class. Occasionally, their attention wanders when activities are too long.
- Pupils enjoy learning French. They like the wide range of activities in lessons but also know that learning a language gives them a new skill and helps them understand others better. Consequently, ML makes a very positive contribution to pupils' personal development and well-being.

Quality of teaching and learning in ML

- The quality of teaching is good overall. Teaching builds on prior learning, is lively and usually fast paced. It is characterised by the use of varied and stimulating activities.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is satisfactory and some is good. There is some use of language learning strategies, such as the teaching of cognates in a Year 3 lesson, to help pupils remember the meanings of words.
- There is good use of the target language in lessons. Simple classroom instructions and praise words are frequently used and some

explanations are given in French. Teachers' pronunciation is satisfactory and some is good.

- There is good use of questioning to check on learning, understanding and pronunciation. However, some plenary sessions are not fully exploited to assess and to consolidate new learning.
- Planning is good. It identifies the learning objectives well, how less able pupils will be supported and how the foreign language assistant will be deployed.
- Teaching assistants are generally well used to support less able learners. The foreign language assistant is deployed satisfactorily, working both inside classroom and with groups of pupils in the Key Stage base area. There is scope to make greater use of the language assistant's linguistic skills in whole class teaching.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) is well used to introduce new concepts in an interesting way and to provide pupils with experience of native speakers. Pupils also have opportunities to develop their learning individually using appropriate programs on the school's website.
- There are good links with other subjects such as art and mathematics. In a Year 5 class, pupils were asked to work out two digit number problems in French and to write the answer in French. Other pupils reported how numbers in French were sometimes revised in numeracy lessons.
- Assessment procedures are developing well. Self-assessment sheets have been introduced for pupils to record their progress in learning aspects of French. The levels pupils are working at are not yet formally assessed and the school has identified this as an area for development. Work is marked and some helpful guidance is given to pupils. Some French praise words are used in marking.

Quality of curriculum

- The curriculum model of using class teachers to teach French, supported by a foreign language assistant, is effective.
- The time allocated for French is appropriate. There is a half hour weekly lesson in each class and regular reinforcement at other times during the week. Registers are taken in French, new phrases are revised and classroom instructions in the target language are used in other lessons.
- The scheme of work is satisfactory. Teaching activities drawn from it match pupils' interests and needs. The scheme places a strong emphasis on oracy, literacy and intercultural understanding, although the latter is not as fully exploited by the school as it could be.
- There are supportive displays in each classroom and in the Key Stage 2 base area. These show aspects of French culture and useful key words, such as months of the year and numbers. Classroom objects, such as computers and windows, are prominently labelled in French.

- There are good enrichment opportunities which promote creativity and enjoyment for pupils. There is a popular lunch-time French club, run by the foreign language assistant, which extends pupils' knowledge of the cultural activities of French speaking countries. A French Week was held last year where pupils were able to experience a French café, listen to French stories and learn about French music and dance.
- Pupils' achievements in French are celebrated by the award of weekly certificates in school assemblies.
- Older pupils have made some dual language books but there are few authentic books, newspapers, comics or magazines which pupils can browse and read for pleasure.

Leadership and management of ML

- You, and the governing body, are very supportive of ML. Funds have been set aside to develop the subject and the school is committed to the local authority's (LA) foreign language assistant programme.
- Subject leadership is good. In your capacity as subject leader, you have attended training for subject leaders and for schools participating in the foreign language assistant programme. Information from this training has been cascaded to staff. Training has also been provided to staff on ML and on working with language assistants by an LA consultant.
- The rationale for choosing French is sound. Factors, such as the support from the LA and the language taught at a local high school were taken into consideration.
- ML features prominently in the school's improvement plan and the section on ML shows clearly the steps the school intends to take to develop the subject.
- Pupils' entitlement to learn a language has been implemented. All pupils in Key Stage 2 learn French and none are withdrawn for other subjects during lesson time.
- A policy for ML has been drawn up which emphasises the development of pupils as 'global citizens'. The school has an accurate self-evaluation of the effectiveness of ML.
- Portfolios containing pupils' work have been created for all year groups and there are plans to pass these to the secondary schools to which pupils transfer.
- Teachers' plans and pupils' books are checked but monitoring of lessons is at an informal stage.
- Useful steps have been taken to engage the support of parents and the local community for ML. A section in a school newsletter explained carefully to parents the advantages of learning French and a video of Year 6 pupils speaking French is shown on the playground TV screens. Members of the local community were invited to visit parts of the French Week held last year.

Implementing languages entitlement

- Implementing entitlement is good. All pupils in Key Stage 2 study a modern language.
- The rationale for learning French is sound and the school has adopted a model that is sustainable.
- Both girls and boys have positive attitudes towards learning languages.
- ICT is well used to enhance pupils' learning and to celebrate their enjoyment of French.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- developing assessment procedures so that the school has a clear view of the levels pupils are working at and which can be shared with secondary schools
- developing further pupils' understanding of grammar
- making monitoring of lessons in ML a regular feature of the school's work
- deepening pupils' intercultural understanding.

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