

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404040
F 020 7421 6855
www.ofsted.gov.uk
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk



13 May 2009

Mr L Nettley
Headteacher
Millais School and Language College
Depot Road
Horsham
West Sussex
RH13 5HR

Dear Mr Nettley

Ofsted survey inspection programme – modern languages

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and those of your staff and students, during my visit on 16-17 March 2009 to look at work in modern languages (ML).

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of the subjects, the visit had a particular focus in ML on how information and communications technology (ICT) is being used by teachers and students to improve language learning.

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.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included: interviews with staff and students, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work and observation of six lessons.

The overall effectiveness of ML was judged to be outstanding.

Achievement and standards

Standards are high and achievement is very good.

- All students study a language Key Stage 4. They achieved very good results in their GCSE examinations in 2008, particularly at grades A*-A where they attained results significantly higher than average. In Spanish the number gaining A*-C is significantly above the national average and in Japanese 100% of students gained A*-C.

- By the end of Key Stage 3 in 2008 teacher assessments show attainment well above national expectations for the large majority of students. This is borne out by evidence from lessons and books.
- Overall, progress in lessons observed in both key stages was very good.
- Students show a willingness to speak; the way in which they have been taught to manipulate the language and to cope with 'information gaps' ensures they can react spontaneously and enjoy doing so. In a Year 11 lesson the teacher pushed them hard to respond to different parts of a dialogue where the content kept changing. They can only do this by listening hard and having the confidence to 'have a go'. Their knowledge of verb paradigms and applying these in communicative contexts is particularly noteworthy.
- They can decipher information from reading passages in text books or on computers at a level commensurate with their ability and maturity.
- Extended writing begins from early in Year 7 where they are expected to write paragraphs which gradually get longer and more complex and set the foundation for the extensive writing they all do in Key Stage 4. There are excellent examples on display as well as in exercise books. Students present their work very well.
- All students spoken to said how much they enjoy learning languages. They are very well behaved in lessons and show very good interest. They are committed because they say that they will need them in the future for jobs. They enjoy very much the extra curricular activities including the European exchanges and visits from other countries and they like being part of a school with such an international flavour. They are proud to come to a Languages College.

Quality of teaching and learning in ML

The quality of teaching and learning is excellent.

- Teachers plan their lessons very well to achieve learning objectives and secure at the very least good outcomes. Students know what they are going to learn and there is always a plenary to check or help them reflect on their learning and think what might make it better.
- There are very good working, caring relationships such that students are eager to work hard and achieve their potential.
- Lessons generally proceed at a very good pace; they are challenging and there are high expectations of all students whatever their abilities. This is also a feature of work in exercise books.
- Teachers present very good role models for speaking as they use the target languages consistently, only using English when appropriate to do so. They also ensure that students have the building blocks of grammatical knowledge so that they can say what they want to say. A Year 9 Spanish and a Year 10 French lesson showed how well students had grasped verb forms, and what a lot they knew.

- Foreign language assistants (FLAs) are integrated into lessons and support students as well as providing a different 'voice'. In a Year 7 lesson in the multimedia lab the FLA was able to take one side of the room whilst the teacher took the other to provide support. In this lesson, the FLA also played games with the students on the interactive whiteboard to consolidate the presentation of new language by the teacher.
- Teachers use ICT well to present new and consolidate previously learned language.
- Key Stage 3 students said how they would like to have speaking tests occasionally as well as tests in listening, reading and writing as they think they would be beneficial in helping them to know more about the examination. Currently their progress is assessed through class work.
- Marking is very regular, consistent across the department and shows high expectations of students. Target comments are helpful and the element of self-assessment in Key Stage 3 books is excellent.
- Students' progress is thoroughly tracked so that any underachievement can be targeted immediately. The department has two learning support assistants with languages backgrounds to help those who need targeted support in lessons as well as supporting individual students to take early examinations.

Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is outstanding.

- The curriculum contributes very well to the students' enjoyment of learning.
- They do French intensively when they arrive in the autumn term in Year 7 and then provision is broadened from January so that all students do French and one other language. German, Spanish, Italian or Japanese are provided.
- There are outstanding opportunities in Key Stage 4. There is not only an excellent choice of languages, but also different types of courses. Students choose from five languages in the core (including a French NVQ). They can then choose from enrichment, accelerated or extended courses which also include a wide range of languages. In three of the four options pathways languages are available again.
- Students are supported to take examinations in home / heritage languages whenever they are ready and gifted students can take early entry supported individually.
- There is a suitable amount of time provided on the timetable however many languages a student takes.
- Schemes of work are good with some cultural awareness and ICT opportunities built in, particularly in the French ones. There is scope to improve the outlined expectations in Year 9.
- The range of exchanges, trips, extra curricular work and European days contributes outstandingly to students' enjoyment and their

understanding of different cultures. Students' cultural understanding is enhanced still further through the school's international work: for example, visitors from abroad, such as Australia; trips, such as to Hungary; and the links other curriculum areas have made such as mathematics with a school in France.

- The work some students do in the community teaching a language in primary schools or care homes, for example, is popular and contributes well to the school's community cohesion agenda. The department is not complacent and is looking to see what more it can add to its programme.

Leadership and management of ML

Leadership and management are excellent.

- You are very supportive of the development of languages.
- There is an excellent climate for learning languages both in the department and through the international work. The school has the International School Award (ISA).
- There is a very good leadership and management structure to support this large department. The languages director of learning is supported by four assistant directors who have specific responsibilities and who help to lead and manage a large staff which includes two language learning assistants, five FLAs and administrative support.
- There are very regular meetings the notes from which show that staff are forward thinking and willing to be innovative.
- There is observation of teaching and learning beyond performance review and the director and assistant directors of learning do joint observations. There is a very good focus on learning.
- Continuing professional development (CPD) is well managed. The school also links with other secondary schools in the area to provide CPD.
- The senior leadership team member who oversees languages supports the director in interpreting and analysing data; student tracking ensures that intervention strategies are put place in to combat any underachievement.
- International work is overseen by the deputy in charge of curriculum.
- It is very clear that all staff work hard as a team to make languages work.
- The ML self-evaluation is accurate and the improvement plan is well prioritised and strongly focussed on student outcomes. The very comprehensive languages audit of student views, the 'Pupil Voice', is an excellent tool for improvement.
- The director of learning is realistic and knows that there are areas for development; she would like to see more student independence and creativity in lessons and this is beginning to develop. There is also discussion about introducing Content Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) into some subject modules lower down the school.

- There are extensive links with the 16 feeder primary schools, supporting them with their development of French, and the staff member in charge of this has the responsibility for developing the transition process for transfer from Year 6 to Year 7.
- The language department has its own dedicated building which serves it well and includes a multimedia suite. There is a good supply of resources including magazines.

How close the school is to reaching the benchmarks for language take-up in Key Stage 4

- The school reaches its target of 100% of students studying at least one language.
- Currently 24% study two languages in Year 11 and 12% in Year 10. Last year some staff absence may have affected numbers.
- In 2009-10 the number increases to 17% in Year 10. The department is very encouraging with competitions, talks, and display of what former students have done with their languages later in life.

How well is ICT used by teachers and students to improve language learning?

This is good.

- Teachers use interactive whiteboards (IWBs) to introduce and consolidate learning, and for starter activities. Students are engaged by this.
- Students could cite different ways they had used ICT, for example, using websites and activities suggested by teachers, word processing coursework, researching the internet, and building up vocabulary.
- A Year 7 lesson demonstrated how it could be integrated well into a lesson with students using it initially to revise work from a previous lesson with a reading comprehension, and finally an interactive worksheet to consolidate language learned in the main part of the lesson. In between the teacher used the IWB to present new language and students learned by repetition and pair work.
- Other uses which emerged were in conjunction with exchanges where emails were sent to make initial contact, a virtual tour of Millais was made for the Belgium exchange, and presentations made on return from visits.
- Whilst some students use it once every two weeks for lessons, for others it is much more spasmodic and they say they rarely use it in lesson time.
- They have access at lunchtimes and after school and can access the school's 'moodle' at home. Year 11 students said they emailed work in for marking.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- considering the use of speaking tests in Key Stage 3
- increasing access to and use of ICT in lessons for all students.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop ML 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

Pam Haezewindt
Her Majesty's Inspector
Subject Adviser for Languages