

20 March 2009

Mrs S Yates  
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Dear Mrs Yates

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 19 March 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 pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of three lessons.

### Context

Spanish has been taught at the school since 2006. Currently, Years 3 and 4 are taught Spanish, Year 5 is taught French and Year 6 is taught German.

### Achievement and standards

- Pupils made good progress overall in lessons observed and some made very good progress. In one very good French lesson in Year 5, more able pupils learnt new vocabulary about sports and then successfully used this and their prior knowledge about the weather to construct complex sentences with connectives.

- Pupils' speaking skills are well developed. Their pronunciation is good. In all lessons observed, pupils spoke confidently and clearly. Their listening skills are also well developed. They listened carefully to instructions and to examples of authentic language speakers and responded well when their pronunciation was corrected.
- Pupils' reading skills are satisfactory. They have opportunities to read from the interactive whiteboard, displays, worksheets and work cards for games and activities. However, there are few opportunities for pupils to read for pleasure from foreign language resources such as comics, newspapers and appropriate children's books.
- Pupils' writing is underdeveloped. Writing consists mostly of completing worksheets with single word answers. Pupils who have studied Spanish have used vocabulary books to record new words in. There are few opportunities for pupils to write in full sentences or at length. However, in one Year 3 lesson, pupils used mini-whiteboards to successfully write short sentences with correctly placed adjectives.
- The intercultural understanding of pupils is satisfactory. Those who have studied Spanish have a stronger understanding of that country's culture than those who are learning French and German. This is partly due to an in depth project on the Spanish autonomous communities which they have completed and which covered for example, local festivals. Whilst pupils know the main countries where the languages they are learning are spoken, they are less clear on where these languages are spoken around the world.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how learning a language can contribute to their future economic well-being. In addition to knowing the advantages languages offer when on holiday, pupils cited how languages can contribute to their university careers. They also cited a range of careers in which languages are useful, such as translating and jobs in the travel, airline and sports industries.
- Pupils greatly enjoy learning languages. All pupils spoken to expressed a wish to continue learning languages at secondary school.
- Languages make a good contribution to pupils' personal development and well-being. In all language lessons observed, pupils were well behaved, listened well and acted promptly and with enthusiasm on teachers' requests. They also worked well together, when asked to do so.

#### Quality of teaching and learning in ML

- Teaching is good overall and some is very good. There is very good use of the target language in most lessons, including praise words and instructions. Teaching is lively and interesting and a good range of activities, such as songs, games and discussion with partners was used to capture and retain the attention of pupils and to reinforce learning.
- Teachers made good use of interactive whiteboards in all lessons observed. These were used to introduce topics, practice new

vocabulary, to provide examples of authentic German and French speakers and to help learners check their pronunciation.

- Teacher' subject knowledge, including pronunciation, is good overall and some is very good. Teachers frequently corrected pupils' pronunciation and modelled the correct pronunciation.
- Planning is good. It is detailed and identifies activities that match pupils' differing abilities. For example, in a German lesson, domino games of varying difficulty, designed to reinforce new phrases and encourage speaking, catered for learners' different levels of ability.
- There is good use of language learning strategies. Phonetic spelling was used in a French lesson to help pupils understand how new vocabulary was pronounced. In a Spanish lesson, pupils' knowledge of popular culture was drawn on to help them remember new vocabulary about colours, for example 'amarillo'. Cognates were also well used to help learners decode and remember the meanings of new words. There was good use of key grammatical terms, such as nouns, adjectives and connectives.
- Additional adults are well used to support less able learners and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.
- Pupils' work is helpfully marked. A number of assessment strategies were used to check on pupils learning, including some well-focused questioning at the end of lessons.

### Quality of curriculum

- Three languages are taught at the school and older pupils who now learn French and German have already studied Spanish. The rationale for teaching three languages is based partly on preparing pupils for learning languages at secondary school and partly on utilising the strengths of staff in this large school.
- The curriculum model used by the school to deliver languages is effective and draws well on the language skills of both teachers and teaching assistants.
- Activities in lessons follow national schemes of work and match well the interests and needs of learners. This contributes to their great enjoyment in learning languages.
- The time allocated for learning languages is very good. Pupils in Key Stage 2 receive at least 50 minutes of language teaching a week although a few pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are withdrawn for additional general support. Some extra support in lessons helps these pupils catch up with their learning. There is some reinforcement of language learning by other teachers of languages, for example by completing the class register in a foreign language.
- Learning is supported by bright, colourful and informative displays in classrooms and around the school. These feature useful vocabulary, cultural aspects of other countries and pupils' work.

- Language portfolios are used to enable pupils to record the development of their skills in language learning but these are not regularly updated.
- A number of good extra-curricular events provide enrichment for the curriculum. Younger pupils have visited a teaching centre to experience a 'Spanish day' and a Flamenco dancer has visited the school. Languages have also featured in class assemblies and there is also an after school French club.

### Leadership and management of ML

- You and the governing body provide strong support for the teaching of languages. The ML skills of staff are well understood due to an annual audit of staff skills. ML features prominently in the school's improvement plan and resources are set aside for its development.
- The teaching of languages has been systematically introduced and developed across Key Stage 2 and is now taught in all classes in the key stage. Teaching is monitored informally by senior leaders.
- The subject leader for modern languages leads her area well and is well informed about developments in language teaching. The views of pupils have been surveyed. Planning is checked and pupils' work scrutinised. The effectiveness of ML is regularly assessed and reported to the senior leadership team and governing body. The subject leader has a clear and reflective view on the school's approach to language provision and its effectiveness.
- The subject leader has attended relevant training and provided training for other staff who teach languages. Opportunities for improving teachers' subject and cultural knowledge are actively pursued. Resources are being continually developed for the subject.
- There is a policy for ML and both long term and short term development plans for the subject exist. Strong links have been recently established with a local secondary school. A new, detailed assessment system has been drawn up in collaboration with this secondary school and is currently being trialled.

### Implementing languages entitlement

- Implementing entitlement is good.
- All pupils in Key Stage 2 learn a language.
- The curriculum model of using the language strengths of teachers and teaching assistants to deliver ML is effective and sustainable. However, the school will need to tackle the issue of progression in terms of pupils' maturity and developing knowledge about language and language learning strategies as they move through the school with a background in language learning.
- ICT is well used to enhance learning and provide experience of authentic speakers.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- developing opportunities for pupils' writing
- improving pupils' intercultural understanding
- developing recording and assessment procedures.

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