

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

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



29 January 2009

Dr J Turnock
Headteacher
Shifnal Primary School
Curriers Lane
Shifnal
Shropshire
TF11 8EJ

Dear Dr Turnock

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 27 January 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, attendance at assembly and a short time in an Early Years Foundation Stage class and a Year 6 classroom.

Context

A language has been taught at Shifnal Primary School for 12 years one way or another, mostly to Year 6 pupils to facilitate transition to secondary school and in recognition of the town twinning association. Since 2007/08 the school has begun to deliver French lower down the school according to a well-thought out structure which will see all pupils in Key Stage 2 learning French by 2009/10. Currently, Years 1, 3 and 4 have regular weekly time-tabled lessons and all pupils learn some simple French at some point during the week.

Achievement

- Pupils in Years 1, 3 and 4 are making very good progress in listening and speaking. They have lots of practice in listening and respond very well. This was most noticeable, for example, when Year 1 played a new language game with a balloon.
- Pronunciation is good because teachers try to ensure there is a good role model and pupils have opportunities to listen to different native speaker voices.
- Pupils develop very good language learning strategies and knowledge about language because teachers ensure they do. At the beginning of each lesson pupils are focussed on what makes a good language learner.
- Sound spelling links are understood. A good example was when two Year 4 boys wrote 'Un chat blue' (instead of 'bleu') – read it out to each other and immediately realised that they could not pronounce 'blue' as bleu and they had used the English spelling, so quickly corrected their writing. Pupils instantly look to spelling in French using the French alphabet.
- Pupils recognise familiar language in stories and can deduce meaning from clues.
- Pupils are exceptionally positive about learning French: this was evident from lessons; walking around the school where French is used for greeting people from three-year olds upwards; talking to pupils; and the assembly.
- Behaviour is exemplary.
- Pupils have some idea of how helpful it can be to learn a language later in life but this is not yet as well developed as it could be.

Quality of teaching and learning in ML

- Teaching and learning has some outstanding features. Planning is excellent and includes planning for both timetabled sessions and consolidation during the week. It is very clear with assessment for learning opportunities built in.
- Differentiation is built in with support teachers or class teachers helping pupils to do their best and enjoy it.
- Timetabled lessons are consistently good, sometimes outstanding, which enable pupils to achieve so well and enjoy themselves.
- Lesson objectives are made clear, and teachers use very good activities, games and resources to achieve them. A lot is accomplished in a short space of time. Sometimes, thinking skills are developed as pupils work out what they need to do. This was tangible in the Year 1 balloon game and the Year 3 mystery game.
- In one lesson a few higher attaining pupils could have achieved a bit more in the time they had.
- Occasionally more routine classroom language could be used such as the consistent use of praise in French.

- Plenary sessions are carefully adhered to and so pupils assess what they have learned and how well they are doing.
- Formal assessment is gradually being built into the programme.
- Teaching and learning activities at other times such as registration, singing, and physical education enthuse pupils as well as consolidating well the work some have done in lessons.

Quality of curriculum

- The school has developed an excellent curriculum model to ensure that all Key Stage 2 pupils will learn a language by 2009/10 and that all will learn at an appropriate level by 2011/12.
- Timetabled sessions last a suitable 40 minutes with a minimum of 20 minutes more to follow up and consolidate work during the week.
- Last year the co-ordinator taught Year 3 with the class 3 teacher alongside. The class 3 teacher now teaches class 3; the co-ordinator now teaches class 4 with the class teacher alongside. By next year class teachers will have taken on the bulk of teaching with the co-ordinator supporting and monitoring.
- Sufficient curriculum professional development has been provided and is planned to enable this to take place.
- The school has adopted an external scheme of work which is supported by the local authority and for which training is given.
- The co-ordinator is aware that some tailoring of the external scheme to meet the school's circumstances is necessary and finds the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) schemes of work useful.
- Overall, the programme of work and activities meet the needs of pupils well, contributing to their enthusiasm and progress. There is a good variety of language resources and teachers use their basic primary classroom resources well to support language learning too. One pupil told me: 'There is something new every time'.
- The few pupils who speak another language are asked to share it in lessons and the school celebrates these few heritage languages. A Polish girl was very proud to be becoming trilingual.
- The school is twinned with a school in France which is in the local twinned town and this supports pupils' cultural development, although there have been no pupil exchanges or visits so far.

Leadership and management of ML

- Leadership and management at all levels are excellent. A very good ethos for language learning pervades the school and community.
- You have been very supportive of the initiative and enabled the school to move forward swiftly so that it is in a good position to meet entitlement by 2010.
- Both pupils and parents have been asked their views about language learning and the school is taking notice of these and planning what it

might do to respond, for example, by planning some opportunities for Year 2.

- The rationale for learning French is well-founded. The development of language learning is embedded in the school development plan and there is an excellent modern languages policy.
- Subject leadership is excellent with a very good grasp of how to lead the initiative and what still needs to be done.
- Continuing professional development is well provided for and linked to the development plan, and there is evidence of how it has been instrumental so far.
- The school is in touch with the local secondary school and both are aware that they will have to work towards transfer and transition next year, and importantly for Year 6 in 2012 when pupils will have studied French for four years.
- Groups of pupils have sung French songs in local churches to raise funds for various needs.

Implementing languages entitlement

- Implementing entitlement is good and improving.
- There is a very effective model with a clear rationale for teaching French.
- Pupils in Years 3 and 4 learn French in timetabled time and future plans are sound.
- Teaching and learning are good or better.
- Simple speaking and listening skills are very good. Reading and writing are at a very early stage.
- Pupils are beginning to have some knowledge about language and develop language learning strategies. Language learning is supporting thinking skills.
- Pupils are exceptionally well motivated.
- Monitoring of provision is not yet well established.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- including more routine classroom language in teaching and learning
- ensuring that the higher attaining pupils learn as much as they possibly can in a lesson
- monitoring provision regularly.

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

Pam Haezewindt
Her Majesty's Inspector
Subject Specialist Adviser for Modern Languages