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Mr K Behrens
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Dear Mr Behrens

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 02 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 two lessons.

Achievement and standards

- From their starting points, pupils' achievement is outstanding in listening, speaking, reading and writing.
- Their response to the activities they are given is very positive. For example, pupils in Year 5 enjoyed describing the solar planets in French, drawing on their knowledge of the solar system from previous work in science. Boys and girls are equally well motivated. One pupil commented, 'French is fun!'
- Written work is very well presented and reflects pupils' self-confidence and their pride in the work they are doing.

- Pupils speak with confidence in French. For example, pupils in Year 3 repeat phrases from stories and pupils in Year 5 have made a video recording themselves presenting weather forecasts in French.
- Relationships are very positive. Pupils work well together and enjoy opportunities to discuss their learning in pairs. This promotes their social skills very well. They set to work as soon as they are given tasks to do and sustain their interest.
- Pupils are very clear that learning a foreign language will be useful for their future lives. They say it will help them attain well when they go on to secondary school. They are aware that being able to converse with people in French is a good social skill and may be helpful in order to buy essential items while abroad.

Quality of teaching and learning in ML

- The language is taught by a well qualified linguist in Years 4 to 6, the ML teacher. The ML teacher has a very good understanding of language teaching methodology for teaching in Key Stage 2. In Year 3, the class teachers teach the modern language. They have a good knowledge of the language and primary language teaching approaches. In Year 3 the native speaker French language assistant supports the teaching.
- Teaching methods focus on active, enjoyable learning using songs, 'powerpoint' presentations, mini white boards, whole class teaching and independent work. In Year 3, small groups also spend time working with the native speaker French language assistant.
- In Year 3, Big Books in French are used successfully as starting points to explore new language. The content of the lessons is very well designed to engage all learners' interest. In Years 4 and 5, the schemes of work are closely linked to topic themes across a range of subjects. For example, pupils in Year 5 were learning about size and colour through discussion of the solar planets, which they were also studying in science. This is particularly effective, holds pupils' attention very well and is suitably challenging.
- Reading and writing are taught explicitly. In Year 3, pupils are introduced to French text through the Big Books. Older pupils read and write sentences and longer texts.
- Pupils' progress is assessed at the end of each topic. Pupils are aware of their progress and appreciate the guidance they receive on what the next steps are in their learning.
- They have very positive attitudes and behave very well in lessons.
- Tasks are generally well matched to pupils' needs. More able pupils are set appropriately challenging work. Pupils who struggle with basic literacy and numeracy are well motivated and do well.

Quality of curriculum

- Pupils have one dedicated ML lesson per week. In Years 5 and 6 the lessons are 50 minutes. In Years 3 and 4 they are 35 minutes. Teachers revisit the learning during the week, particularly in Years 3 and 4.
- The school's scheme of work is based closely on the new Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) scheme, is clear and includes guidance for each topic so that other teachers could use the plans to deliver the learning. Planning ensures that all areas of the Key Stage 2 Framework are well covered, and includes explicit references to the headings and objectives.
- The use of information and communication technology (ICT) is a particular strength. The ML teacher has developed a large variety of resources for use on the interactive whiteboard to support language learning. These include many power point presentations.
- Pupils are developing a very good knowledge about language. In Year 5, the ML teacher made very good use of specific language terminology to introduce new language. For example, pupils were using 'nom', 'nom propre', and 'adjectif' to describe different parts of the sentences they were reading and writing about the solar planets. The pupils were also discussing the position of adjectives in French and making comparisons with English. Very good links between subjects means that in French lessons comparisons are made with recent learning in English literacy lessons. For example, pupils in Year 6 were learning connectives in French, 'mais' and 'parce que'.

Leadership and management of ML

- Leaders have established a clear rationale for ML. As a result, pupils achieve very well.
- Leaders monitor the quality of ML provision and have a very good awareness of the school's strengths. Priorities for development rightly include improving arrangements for transfer of assessment information to secondary schools when pupils leave the school at the end of Year 6. Links are developing with local secondary schools, but information about pupils' achievement and the standards that they reach is not systematically passed on.

Implementing languages entitlement

Implementing entitlement is outstanding.

- All Key Stage 2 pupils learn French. There is an effective model of delivery in Key Stage 2 and very good provision for all pupils in Years 3 to 6. The curriculum and teaching and learning are exemplary.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring that assessment information is routinely transferred to secondary schools at the end of Year 6 to support progression and transition.

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

Madeleine Gerard
Additional Inspector