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Mrs A Williams  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Williams

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

Context

French has been taught for a number of years in different classes at the school. Since September 2007 it has been taught systematically in Years 1 to Year 6.

## Achievement

- The progress pupils make in lessons is good and sometimes outstanding.
- Pupils' skills in speaking are well developed. They speak confidently in class. Those in Years 3 and 4 can speak a number of phrases and short sentences while older pupils are able to talk about themselves, where they live and what they like or dislike. They have a good range of vocabulary. Pronunciation is satisfactory and sometimes good.
- Pupils' listening skills are good. They listen carefully to their teacher, can follow classroom instructions and understand and answer questions accurately.
- Reading is also developing well and some pupils are making very good progress. They have opportunities to read from worksheets, whiteboards and displays around the school.
- Writing skills are satisfactory overall and some are good. Pupils complete worksheets, quizzes, booklets and posters. In a good Year 6 lesson, pupils produced posters by writing sentences on the theme of what sports and activities they liked and disliked. Some used connectives to join sentences together. There are some opportunities for extended writing.
- Pupils' behaviour is very good. They listened well in lessons and followed instructions promptly.
- Learners thoroughly enjoy learning French. They cite the wide and interesting variety of activities and how learning a language teaches them about another culture. Languages make a very good contribution to pupils' personal development and well-being.
- Pupils' understanding of how useful languages can be for their future careers is satisfactory. They know languages are helpful when travelling or holidaying abroad and in some jobs. Their intercultural understanding is underdeveloped. They can cite some aspects of French culture but are less clear about how widely French is spoken throughout the world.

## Quality of teaching and learning in ML

- The quality of teaching observed was good and sometimes outstanding.
- Teaching was characterised by a good pace, a range of different and interesting activities, games and role play. In one lesson, costumes were used creatively to enliven learning about the names of garments.
- Use of the target language was very good. Praise words, greetings and instructions were frequently used.
- The teacher's subject knowledge and pronunciation is very good.
- Teaching methodology is good and is well used to ensure pupils make good progress in learning French. Good use was also made of pupils' own linguistic abilities. In one lesson, a discussion with one pupil about

adjectival positioning in his home language of Arabic helped reinforce pupils' understanding of this concept in French.

- Information and communication technology (ICT) was well used in all lessons observed. The interactive whiteboard was used both to introduce new learning and to reinforce it. In an outstanding lesson in Year 1, the teacher taught pupils several new phrases and asked several to record their efforts on a recording device. The immediate playback of pupils' speech in French consolidated their new learning and encouraged and prepared them for the next stage of the lesson.
- There was good use of language learning strategies. In one lesson, cognates were effectively used to remind pupils of how to remember an article of clothing and there was good teaching of sound-spelling links to teach pupils how to pronounce 'ch' in French.
- Planning is good, but its great detail slowed the pace of learning at times as the teacher referred to it. It identifies how more able pupils will be challenged. For example, in a good Year 6 lesson, the teacher worked with more able pupils to teach them how to use the connective 'car'.
- Some opportunities are not fully exploited to assess, reinforce and consolidate new concepts. For example, in one lesson, learners would also have benefited from the modelling of how to use connectives to join contrasting sentences.
- Marking is satisfactory. There is scope to provide pupils with more guidance on what they need to do to improve their written work. A number of assessment procedures have been introduced whereby pupils can chart their progress in learning French.
- Pupils are keen to answer questions and participate enthusiastically in activities. They settle quickly to their work and older pupils know to use vocabulary sheets to assist them in writing when necessary.

### Quality of curriculum

- The curriculum model of using a specialist teacher to deliver French is effective. Class teachers observe teaching and assist during the lesson.
- The time devoted to French is appropriate. Pupils receive a thirty minute lesson each week and there is reinforcement of vocabulary and other aspects of the language by class teachers during the week.
- Programmes of study match the interests of pupils. They are most effective when they coincide with other aspects of learning, such as the school project on former pupils' participation in the First World War in France.
- The curriculum is enriched by visits from local restaurateurs, by a residential trip to France for older pupils which includes visits to World War One battlefields, and by 'culture days' of which French is a part.
- The school uses two commercial schemes of work that align with the Key Stage 2 Framework for ML.
- Learning is supported by a good range of posters, labels and displays, some of which are bilingual.

- The school website contains a French section which is well used by older pupils.
- Homework is given and supports learning in class.
- Learning is supported by the award in assemblies of certificates celebrating pupils' academic achievements in the subject. Award winners are also celebrated in school newsletters.
- French also features in some assemblies.
- There are some books in French which pupils can browse for pleasure.

### Leadership and management of ML

- Subject leadership is good. The subject leader has ensured that pupils' entitlement to learning a language in Key Stage 2 has been implemented.
- The rationale for choosing French is well founded. The strengths of staff, the languages taught at local high schools and the strong community and school links with France because of the First World War have all been taken into account.
- A policy for ML is in place. Self-evaluation is good and is completed annually.
- You, the senior leadership team and the governing body are very supportive of ML. The teaching of ML is included in the school improvement plan but plans to ensure the sustainability of ML teaching are in the early stages of development.
- The subject leader has attended a good level of training. Training on how to provide reinforcement in French during times outside language lessons and on a newly introduced scheme of work has been delivered to teaching staff.
- Monitoring of the effectiveness of the subject is at an early stage of development.
- A good bank of computerised resources has been built up for teaching French. These are supplemented with dictionaries and some 'big books.'
- The recoding of pupils' achievements has been promoted by use of the European Languages Portfolio and pupils' progress is assessed and recorded in other areas of the curriculum, especially reading.
- There are satisfactory links with secondary schools and pupils' work folders are passed onto them when they transfer to their next school.
- Links are maintained with parents through the school newsletter. The views of pupils and parents about learning French have also been sampled. Parents are very positive about pupils learning languages.

### Implementing languages entitlement

- Implementing entitlement is good. French is taught in all four years of Key Stage 2.
- ICT is well used to provide experience of native speakers and to extend pupils' knowledge of the language and French culture.

- There is good provision for less able pupils and for those that are gifted and talented.
- The existing linguistic skills of pupils with home and heritage languages are well used.
- Plans for the sustainability of ML and monitoring the effectiveness of provision are in the early stages of development.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- improving pupils' intercultural understanding and their understanding of how languages can be useful in their future studies and careers
- developing pupils' writing
- developing a more detailed action plan to ensure the sustainability of languages teaching at the school.

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.

Ofsted gathers information on the immediate and longer-term impact of survey inspections, both on the institutions themselves, and with a view to improving its own processes. To this end, I should be grateful if you would complete the attached questionnaire and return it within the next ten days. We have also just sent a copy of the questionnaire by email. Please return your completed questionnaire to either the email or postal address on the form, not to me. We may also contact some schools by telephone after several months in order for us to gain a picture of longer-term impact. Thank you in advance for your assistance.

Yours sincerely

Michael McIlroy  
Her Majesty's Inspector