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Mrs Pile  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Pile

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 17 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 one lesson, interviews with staff and pupils as well as scrutiny of documentation.

Context

French has been taught to approximately half the pupils who are currently in Year 5 for two and a half years by a specialist from the local secondary school, for 30 minutes a week. Some other year groups have had some language lessons, taught by the class teachers, on an ad-hoc basis. The current Year 6 are receiving 30 minutes a week as they are a mixed-age class who are taught with one half of Year 5.

Achievement and standards

- The Year 5 pupils who have had two and a half years of language learning are able to ask and answer questions about their name and age, they also know some numbers and colours. Most of the French

they speak and write is single words, often nouns. Their pronunciation is adequate.

- They can copy individual words with some accuracy but writing of any length is not a regular feature of their work. When listening and reading, pupils work from stories such as 'The Hungry Caterpillar' in French and they are able to understand these using their knowledge of the story in English and the pictures to help.
- Pupils with learning difficulties are supported well and take part in activities with growing independence; higher attaining pupils have fewer opportunities to demonstrate what they can do.
- Other year groups, including Year 6, have had much less teaching and so have made less progress. Most can remember some colours and numbers but have more difficulty with questions and answers about themselves.
- Few pupils have developed an ability to work independently in their language learning. More able pupils said that they could not look things up at home or outside the lesson as they had few notes or dictionaries available.
- Very few pupils speak another language but where they do, they are encouraged to make comparisons with the French that they are learning.
- Pupils have some understanding of the similarities and differences between the culture of French speaking countries and their own but this is not well developed. They have few opportunities to contact native speakers.
- Pupils enjoy learning a language but would like to do this more regularly. They feel that it is important to be able to speak to people from other countries, even if they only meet them in England, and they feel that it will be helpful to have done some French before secondary school.

#### Quality of teaching and learning in ML

- An audit has shown that all teachers in Key Stage 2 have a qualification in French but as yet almost all of the teaching is being done by a teacher from a local language college.
- Planning is based on a scheme designed by the secondary school, loosely based on the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) schemes of work. There are some missed opportunities to extend the more able pupils and to allow them to work more independently.
- Teachers use a range of activities such as games and songs which pupils enjoy and they participate willingly in lessons.
- Teachers sometimes use information and communication technology (ICT) to help pupils to practise their French but rarely to allow pupils to contact native speakers or to use authentic websites.
- Reading is currently under-developed and sound-spelling links are not made explicit enough to pupils with the result that pronunciation is sometimes inaccurate.

- Teachers are beginning to assess pupils' progress using the Languages Ladder and are considering using this as a way of transferring information to secondary schools.

### Quality of curriculum

- The current curriculum model is based on a secondary teacher working with a group of pupils in Years 5 and 6 for 30 minutes a week. The primary teacher is present in the lessons alongside the secondary teacher and reinforces some of the languages taught at other times in the week, for up to ten minutes, but there is no time built in for discussion or training.
- This model has not been as sustainable as originally planned as there have been staff changes so the current teachers in Years 3 and 4/5 have not had support and are only teaching French for up to ten minutes a week.
- The programme for Years 5 and 6 is not sufficiently differentiated to meet the needs of the Year 5 pupils who have had French for two and a half years and Year 6 who have had significantly less.
- The current scheme covers some elements of the Key Stage 2 Framework for Languages, such as oracy, but there is less emphasis on developing cultural understanding and language learning skills. A new scheme is being planned for next year when all pupils in Key Stage 2 will have the opportunity to learn French.

### Leadership and management of ML

- The school leadership team recognises the importance of language learning to both the cultural and academic development of its pupils and has a good idea of the strengths and weaknesses of the current model of implementation.
- Teachers are encouraged to attend local training sessions, mostly run by the local authority, and this has enabled teachers to improve both their own language skills and their methodology. There is, however, too little time built in for the secondary teacher to help train the primary teachers in school.
- The school is beginning to explore how learning French links with literacy and to investigate how it can support progress in key elements such as developing listening skills.

### Implementing languages entitlement

Implementing entitlement is satisfactory.

- Current pupils in Year 5 and 6 are learning a language for 30-40 minutes a week. Other pupils have approximately ten minutes per week.
- The introduction of language teaching from Year 3 over two years ago, using the specialist support from the language college, has not been as

sustainable as expected owing to staff changes and a lack of training time in school.

- There is effective leadership from the newly-appointed subject leader. An audit has been carried out which has identified that most staff have some qualifications in French; support to enable them to teach languages is planned and the subject co-ordinator is investigating appropriate ways to ensure that all pupils in Key Stage 2 learn a language from September 2009.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring that the curriculum meets the needs of pupils in mixed-age and mixed-experience classes
- ensuring that staff have adequate training and support, especially in Years 3 and 4, to introduce language teaching to their classes
- developing pupils' understanding of the similarities and differences between the culture of French speaking nations and their own.

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

Joanna Peach  
Additional Inspector