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Mrs E Adams
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Adams

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 20 May 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 four lessons.

Context

All pupils in the school, from Nursery to Year 6, learn Spanish. Provision for Spanish started through local authority (LA) outreach support in 2006, and in 2008 a ML specialist was appointed to lead developments in the school.

Achievement

- Given their starting points, pupils make excellent progress.
- They listen very attentively and respond enthusiastically to oral and visual prompts.
- They speak clearly and confidently, with accurate pronunciation and intonation.

- Whilst their learning is strongly focused on developing listening and speaking skills, older pupils are learning to read. They have an excellent understanding of sound/spelling links in Spanish.
- Pupils are extremely positive about learning Spanish and about Spanish and Latin American cultures.
- They value one another's languages in this multi-lingual school and think language-learning is very important for their futures. Older pupils know which languages are provided in their destination secondary schools and are looking forward to continuing with their studies.
- They are very proud of their school's Spanish developments. They talked with great enthusiasm, for example, of the Spanish phonics pages on its website, its links with a local football club and Year 5 pupils are particularly proud of their teacher's study visit to Spain.

Quality of teaching and learning in ML

- Teaching in all classes observed was characterised by an energetic enthusiasm for Spanish and this was infectious: pupils are very keen to demonstrate how much they know and can do.
- Class teachers and learning support assistants work closely with the school's languages coordinator and with the local authority (LA) outreach teacher to provide pupils with a very high quality of experience in Spanish.
- Both the coordinator and the visiting outreach teacher provide excellent models of language for their colleagues and for pupils.
- Lesson planning is very detailed and results in pupils making outstanding progress during sessions. Schemes of work are currently being reviewed to ensure that this progress is maintained over the long-term as pupils move through the school.
- Teachers make excellent links with the whole-school curriculum, for example in literacy work, where older pupils use connectives, and in physical education where pupils work to Spanish imperatives.
- Resources are of a very high calibre. Interactive whiteboards are used widely to provide stimulating prompts for learning. Basic school resources are adapted very creatively to integrate Spanish into pupils' wider learning. For example, fresh fruit was used to simulate shopping in a Spanish market; a well-loved puppet helped pupils learn street directions; and familiar support materials reinforced numbers for very young pupils in Reception.

Quality of curriculum

- Pupils throughout the school learn Spanish as a discrete subject for 30 minutes a week, and their learning is then reinforced across the curriculum by their class teachers during the remainder of the week.
- All staff are involved in developing Spanish, and class teachers and teaching assistants are well supported by the specialist coordinator and by the LA outreach teacher.

- Spanish is well integrated into the curriculum in all areas of planning, assessment and reporting to parents.
- Planning is led by the coordinator, who uses the Key Stage 2 Framework and Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) schemes of work, and ensures that all teachers understand the learning objectives.
- Excellent extra-curricular opportunities ensure pupils understand the wider objectives of language-learning. For example, links with a leading local football club resulted in their Spanish-speaking goal-keeper visiting the school and answering pupils' questions. A number of pupils also participated in a visit to the stadium for an event linking languages with international football.
- Pupils' home and heritage languages are valued, for example in school displays.

Leadership and management of ML

- There is a very strong commitment from senior leaders and governors to the development of Spanish in the school.
- The rationale for choice of language has determined the development of the initiative and the move towards sustainability of the subject across all classes.
- The school's languages coordinator has very strong subject knowledge and the skills necessary to train colleagues. This is a winning combination and staff speak with enthusiasm of their own developing skills in teaching Spanish. This partnership approach is working very well.
- Continuing professional development is a real strength. A group of teachers (and the Chair of Governors) meets early in the morning once a week to develop their Spanish with the languages coordinator. She models good practice in the activities she leads and enables colleagues to discuss points of language-teaching methodology.
- The school uses external support very well. Service level agreement work with the LA primary languages support team enables more class teachers to benefit from expert modelling and coaching.
- A project is underway to enable the coordinator to develop a bridging unit with local secondary schools to support effective transition.
- All aspects of planning, review and evaluation are of a very high quality.

Implementing languages entitlement

- Progress towards implementing entitlement is outstanding. The school has introduced Spanish in a very methodical way, and, as a result, the initiative has generated high levels of support from pupils and staff and from the wider parental community.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- developing long-term schemes of work, to underpin pupils' progression in grammatical understanding and reading and writing skills
- consolidating links with secondary schools to ensure that pupils' excellent Spanish skills, knowledge and understanding are built on effectively from Year 7.

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

Anne Feltham
Her Majesty's Inspector