

07 July 2009

Mrs P Roy-Chowdhury  
Headteacher  
Thorn Grove Primary School  
Bishop's Stortford  
Hertfordshire  
CM23 5LD

Dear Mrs Roy-Chowdhury

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 26 June 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 Key Stage 2 lessons and an assembly.

### Context

French has been taught at the school for four years. Currently pupils have one discreet lesson per week in each year group in Key Stages 1 and 2 taught by an external teacher. The headteacher is relatively new in post and this is a legacy model of delivery.

### Achievement

- Pupils' achievements from starting points are good.
- They listen attentively and respond enthusiastically.
- When asked basic questions on several topics Years 5 and 6 could respond well and think hard about what they needed to say to answer

in sentences. Their recall of such things as numbers and days of the week is good.

- They read, match and write words accurately from early on and later there are some good examples of sentence formation.
- There is some evidence of a small amount of free writing such as describing Christmas.
- Progression throughout Key Stage 2 is clear.
- Pupils enjoy learning a language, in particular singing traditional songs, having conversations and building up sentences.
- Older ones have some knowledge of where French is spoken other than France and how important it is to learn a language, but this is mainly from their own general knowledge.
- Overall, ML contributes well to pupils' personal development and well-being.

### Quality of teaching and learning in ML

- Teaching and learning are generally good.
- In the two lessons observed all teaching was in French and pupils responded very well. Pupils spoken to said that it was usually about half and half but they would prefer it to be fully in French as 'it makes you feel as if you are in France'.
- Teaching provided a good role model, and pupils benefited from this. They mostly have good accents and pronunciation.
- Pupils benefited from clearly structured lessons, interspersed with songs, leading to a specific outcome. However, planning is not as good as it might be: it does not, for example focus on how the lesson will support less and more able pupils. The Year 6 lesson focussed as it was on the Italian Market in town, which some pupils were visiting, and on a comparison of French and Italian vocabulary, leading to speaking some French, was better than the Year 5 lesson. The latter was based on a new resource but without the careful adaptation needed or the accompanying materials. Nevertheless, pupils enjoyed the lesson very much and learned new French.
- There are good working relationships.
- Formal assessment has not yet begun. Learning is checked at the end of the lessons in the form of a brief plenary, as well as during the lesson when pupils work in pairs. Some Year 6 pupils have 'can do' statements in their folders which are filled in, but not all.

### Quality of curriculum

- The current curriculum model relies too much on an external teacher who teaches French for 45 minutes a week in each class. This is not generally followed up by class teachers since the teacher teaches in other primary schools in the region and has no time built in to brief class teachers, although in one or two classes registers are taken in

French or some French is incorporated into their topics such as in Year 1: 'At the seaside'.

- The time provided is suitable.
- Planning and schemes of work rely on extracts from published courses. The content of these meets the needs of learners satisfactorily.
- Pupils enjoy the activities provided in lessons.
- There is some alignment with the Key Stage 2 Framework for ML.
- There is some knowledge about language built in.
- Some cultural awareness is raised, but intercultural understanding is not a particularly strong element of provision.
- Language learning is celebrated very well in terms of achievement, for example in assemblies, and in display all around the school including the nursery.
- Some cross-curricular approaches have already begun and Year 5 pupils were already finding out what the vegetables they had grown were called in French and presented these at the assembly observed.

### Leadership and management of ML

- You have quickly recognised that the school needs to move to a more sustainable model of delivery and is planning to start from the beginning of 2009/10.
- From September 2009 classroom teachers will take over some of the teaching of French, with a programme of training by the external teacher, the local authority and the local secondary school. The aim is for teaching by the classroom teachers to spread. You have done an audit of ML staff expertise and know whom you can call on. You have appointed a co-ordinator and a teaching assistant with good language knowledge who will support this.
- Your detailed self-evaluation of ML is astute, recognising clearly what needs to be done to succeed and provide a coherent programme. Self-evaluation action points are due to form the ML Development Plan along with all subject development plans by the end of term.
- So far there are insufficient resources, particularly for work beyond lessons. For example: work in the library, research and listening.
- The school is in touch with its secondary schools; the external teacher has ideas about what information she can transfer at the end of the year, but transition from Year 6 to Year 7 has yet to be broached.

### Implementing languages entitlement

- Overall, implementing entitlement is good because all children in Key Stages 2 (and 1) learn French and there is good progress.
- A more effective model of delivery is planned for 2009/10 onwards.
- Teaching and learning are good, including some reading and writing from early stages, but intercultural understanding is not developed well enough.
- Pupils are beginning to have some knowledge about language.

- Pupils have very positive attitudes towards learning a language. This is evident from their lessons, their discussions with the inspector and your consultation with them.
- Progress is not yet assessed and recorded.
- Planning for different abilities is not evident.
- The school is beginning to make effective use of pupils' home and heritage languages to celebrate language learning.
- You are supportive and have looked carefully at what needs to be done to ensure sustainable delivery and have taken steps to plan that.
- You have consulted parents on their views: they are very much in favour of language learning at Thorn Grove and would like to know more about their children's progress.
- Governors are fully supportive although there is not yet a 'link' governor.
- Monitoring and evaluation of provision is currently informal but there are plans to formalise this along with implementing more formal assessment from September.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring that the ML development plan is compiled, and monitored regularly by the co-ordinator, you and governors
- ensuring that the plans you have are put into practice from September 2009
- ensuring that schemes of work and planning are tailored to the needs of the school and its pupils
- increasing resources.

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 Adviser for Languages