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14 July 2009

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Dear Mr Gregory

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 29 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 three lessons.

Context

French was introduced in Year 3 in September 2006. It is now taught in all year groups except Year 6.

Achievement

- The progress made by pupils in lessons observed was good.
- Pupils' pronunciation is satisfactory and some is good, reflecting the school's strong focus on speaking. Pupils have good opportunities to

practise speaking; for example, with their 'talk partners'. They have a good range of vocabulary and older pupils can form sentences, including some where the negative case is used.

- Listening skills are good. These are developed through listening to instructions, teachers reading stories and to authentic French speakers on computer programs.
- Pupils have a good understanding of basic grammar. Older pupils could explain which of the definite and indefinite articles were masculine and feminine and that adjectives follow the noun in French. They also show some understanding that accents alter the sounds of words.
- Pupils' writing skills are developing. They have some opportunities to write French as part of homework activities and to copy-write on worksheets, but there are as yet few opportunities to carry out extended writing.
- Pupils' understanding of the usefulness of learning a language is good. One pupil even explained how learning one language would make it easier to learn others.
- Pupils enjoy learning French very much. Learning languages makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development and well-being. Pupils were well behaved in lessons, listened well and were mostly keen to respond to questions.
- Pupils' intercultural understanding is satisfactory.

Quality of teaching and learning in ML

- Teachers' subject knowledge is good overall. Some pronunciation is satisfactory, but this will improve with practice.
- There is good use of the target language in lessons, for example, in giving instructions, practising the French alphabet and using praise words.
- There is good use of language learning strategies. Cognates were well used in one lesson to help pupils work out the meaning of a word. Pupils were also suitably alerted to the concept of 'false friends' when working out the meaning of the word 'gentille.' Teachers also used actions to help pupils remember different words and pointed out useful rhymes to help them pronounce some vocabulary.
- Pupils' prior learning was well drawn on, particularly at the start of lessons.
- Planning is generally good. It identifies clearly the key points of new learning and how additional adults will be deployed in lessons. It also identifies how reinforcement should be carried out at other parts of the week, although this is not carried out as regularly as it could be. The needs of pupils of different abilities are planned for, although these do not always cater well enough for the needs of the more able.
- Additional adults are well employed in lessons.
- Teachers use a good range of strategies to encourage speaking and listening. In a Year 3 lesson, pupils had good opportunities to repeat

and practise new vocabulary. In this and other lessons, pupils were asked to work with their 'talk partner' to practise new learning.

- Information and communication technology (ICT) is used well by teachers. In a Year 1 lesson, an interactive computer program was well used to help pupils remember the names of zoo animals.

Quality of curriculum

- The curriculum model is effective and sustainable. ML has been successfully introduced by the subject leader who is a language specialist and with each year an increasing number of classes are taught by class teachers.
- All pupils, apart from those in Year 6 learn French. Older pupils in Key Stage 2 are working at a more advanced level, which reflects their maturity and the greater length of time they have been studying the language.
- The time allocated to learning a language is good. Pupils in Key Stage 1 receive 20 minutes per week and those in Key Stage 2 receive 40 minutes. There is some reinforcement of learning at other times during the week, such as taking the register in French.
- The school has drawn up its own scheme of work which draws appropriately on the new Key Stage 2 Framework for Languages. There is a strong emphasis on oracy, literacy and language learning strategies. Topics that are studied match pupils' interests well.
- There are a number of opportunities for pupils to be creative in their language learning, such as in the role play area in one classroom, where there is a French supermarket. In a Year 5 lesson, pupils were asked to act out the key features of characters in the story they were studying.
- There are some good links with other topics studied in school, such as a recent healthy eating and sporting week and a Year 3 geography topic on France that used the cartoon character of Tintin.
- Learning is well supported by a good range of supportive displays and French language labels in classrooms and around the school. These highlight key words, phrases and current topics being studied, such as the story of 'Le Petit Chaperon Rouge' in Year 5. There are a number of French language books in classrooms and some stories for younger pupils have been translated into French.
- The curriculum is enriched by a well attended Italian club which is aimed at pupils in Year 6, who do not formally learn a language.
- Pupils have access to useful computer programs which extend their learning. These can also be accessed from home through the school's website and a good number of pupils do so. Some aspects of homework also reinforce new learning.

Leadership and management of ML

- You are very supportive of the introduction of ML and have ensured that the rolling programme to introduce it has been adhered to and is well resourced. ML and its development are included in the school's improvement plan.
- Careful consideration has been given to the choice of language to be taught with the strengths of staff have been taken into consideration.
- Subject leadership is good. The subject leader has successfully introduced the rolling programme of French teaching which began with Year 3 in 2006. It is on course to ensure that by next year all pupils in Key Stage 2 will be learning a foreign language.
- Suitable schemes of work and lesson plans have been drawn up for use in the year groups where French is taught. A good bank of teaching resources has also been developed, including games, worksheets and ICT programs.
- There are good arrangements for staff to develop their subject knowledge.
- The school hosts a French language club for parents that is run by a local college. This enables parents to help their children with the learning of French.
- Assessment and recording materials have been agreed which, when implemented, will provide more information on pupils' progress in French for teachers within the school and at secondary school.
- There are well advanced plans for the school to initiate links with a French school.
- Monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning are at an early stage of development.

Implementing languages entitlement

- Implementing entitlement is good.
- The model of delivery is effective and sustainable.
- Most pupils in Key Stage 2 learn a language and the school's rolling programme aims to ensure that all will do so by the start of the new academic year.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- Pupils are developing language learning strategies well.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- developing procedures for effective monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning in ML
- improving pupils' intercultural understanding
- developing writing opportunities for older pupils.

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

Michael McIlroy
Her Majesty's Inspector