

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404040
F 020 7421 6855
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



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Mrs L Ironmonger
Headteacher
Waterloo Primary School
Worthington Street
Ashton-Under-Lyne
Lancashire
OL7 9NA

Dear Mrs Ironmonger

Ofsted survey inspection programme – modern languages

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 24 September 2009 to look at work in modern languages (ML).

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of the subject, the visit had a particular focus on how well the school is implementing entitlement in Key Stage 2.

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.

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.

Achievement in primary languages

- Progress in the lessons seen was satisfactory overall.
- Pupils' pronunciation and speaking skills are developing satisfactorily. Most know a number of key phrases, such as salutations, and some can carry out simple conversations with each other.
- Pupils' reading skills are satisfactory.
- Writing skills are not as well developed as they could be. Although pupils use mini-whiteboards to note down individual words and complete some worksheets, there is scope for older pupils to write phrases and sentences.

- Pupils' understanding of grammar and their knowledge about language is developing. They have a basic knowledge of gender and of punctuation and know that accents change the sound of words.
- Language learning makes a satisfactory contribution to pupils' personal development. Pupils enjoy learning languages and cite the games and activities in Spanish lessons as reasons for this. Most listen well in class.
- Pupils' intercultural understanding is not as broad as it could be. Pupils can name a few countries where Spanish is spoken and some customs, different foods and some famous Spanish personalities, such as Pablo Picasso.
- Pupils' awareness of how languages can contribute to their future careers and economic well-being is underdeveloped. They are able to name a few jobs where languages could be useful, such as teaching or being a doctor, and know that learning a language is useful for travelling and living abroad.

Quality of teaching of primary languages

- Overall, teaching is satisfactory. Prior learning is usually drawn on well and additional adults are used effectively to support pupils.
- Teachers' pronunciation and subject knowledge are satisfactory and some are good. Although teachers make satisfactory use of the target language in lessons, there is scope increase its use to give pupils more experience of listening to spoken Spanish. There is some explicit teaching of sound-spelling links.
- Planning is satisfactory and some is evaluated well. However, in some planning there is little evidence of how work is matched to the different abilities of learners.
- Several useful links are made with other subjects. A good example of this was in a Year 2 mathematics lesson where pupils used their knowledge of the numbers from one to 12 in Spanish to complete addition and subtraction calculations.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) is generally well used in lessons to introduce new vocabulary and to provide some reading opportunities. It is also used to enable pupils to hear how new vocabulary is pronounced and to practise its use through games.
- Teachers use a range of activities such as songs, games and quizzes in lessons. Teachers supplement these activities with a range of resources, such as appropriate toys and puppets, DVDs and occasionally worksheets. However, some activities last too long which contributes to some inattention.

- There are satisfactory opportunities for pupils to be creative. In one class, Year 4 and Year 5 pupils were working towards making a Spanish booklet about animals for younger learners.

Quality of the curriculum in primary languages

- All pupils in Key Stage 2 learn Spanish and there are opportunities for younger pupils to learn and practise key phrases and numbers.
- The time allocated to learning Spanish is suitable. Pupils are taught Spanish for half an hour each week and have daily reinforcement opportunities through greetings, answering the attendance and dinner registers and revising key points of learning.
- There are good displays around the school and in classrooms focusing, for example on days of the week, numbers and months of the year. Some usefully show aspects of Spanish culture and others highlight quotations from sporting personalities and musicians about why they value learning a language.
- There is a scheme of work that broadly meets the needs of pupils. There are plans to utilise its assessment procedures to track how well pupils have understood each unit of learning.
- Key events such as the European Day of Languages are celebrated and the school has also hosted a Spanish Festival.
- Learning is supported by a good number of bilingual books in classrooms and in the library.
- Videos of pupils participating in Spanish activities can be viewed on the school's website and on information screens around the school and in the playground.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in primary languages

- You and the governing body are supportive of languages learning. The rationale for the choice of Spanish is good, as local secondary schools' provision and pupils' holiday destinations have been taken into account.
- The model of delivery is effective. In most classes, Spanish is delivered by the class teacher and, in some, it is in conjunction with a high school teacher who is a native speaker.
- The subject leader provides sound leadership for the subject. A policy for ML has been drawn up and there is an annual action plan, although ML is not included in the current school development plan.
- Staff have been able to attend a number of courses and meetings in order to develop their language skills.

- There is some monitoring of the effectiveness of the subject. Assessment procedures are at a very early stage of development. There are appropriate plans to trial pupils' portfolios of work.

Progress towards entitlement in Key Stage 2

- This is good. All pupils in Key Stage 2 learn Spanish.
- The senior leadership team is supportive of languages and has planned and implemented the introduction of the teaching of languages, having tried a number of different models of delivery.
- Both boys and girls have positive attitudes towards learning languages.
- Pupils are beginning to develop some knowledge about languages.
- ICT is used well to enhance teaching and learning.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- providing more opportunities for writing, particularly for older pupils
- developing pupils' intercultural understanding
- ensuring greater use of the target language in lessons
- developing assessment and recording procedures, so that the school and secondary schools have a clearer picture of pupils' attainment and progress in languages.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop modern languages in the school.

As I explained in my previous letter, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority and will be published on the Ofsted website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Michael McIlroy
Her Majesty's Inspector