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14 October 2009

Mrs L Mortimer
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Mortimer

Ofsted survey inspection programme – modern languages

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 5 October 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.

Context

French was introduced in 2006. The vast majority of pupils speak English as an additional language and many enter the school with little or no English.

Achievement in primary languages

- Pupils' speaking skills are developing well. They are able to ask basic questions and hold simple conversations. Their pronunciation is satisfactory and their range of vocabulary is growing. Most listen well in class and are keen to practise new learning.

- Pupils have some opportunities to develop their reading skills through reading from interactive whiteboards and a number of appropriate French language books. However, writing is underdeveloped. Older pupils have few opportunities to write in French.
- Pupils' knowledge about language is developing satisfactorily.
- Pupils' intercultural understanding is underdeveloped and their awareness of how learning a language can benefit their future careers is at an early stage of development.
- Pupils enjoy learning languages and it makes a good contribution to their personal development.

Quality of teaching of primary languages

- Teachers' subject knowledge is good overall as is their pronunciation.
- There is good use of the target language in most lessons for older pupils. In some lessons, opportunities to use French were missed.
- Additional adults are used well to support learning in class. In a Year 3 lesson, a teaching assistant worked well with a group of pupils to help them to practise responses to simple questions.
- Teachers use their pedagogical skills well to make learning interesting. Teaching was usually fast paced and employed a range of activities, although some activities needed clearer explanation. The quality of planning is variable. Some lacks detail and some does not indicate how the needs of pupils of different abilities will be met.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) is generally used well to introduce new vocabulary and to give pupils opportunities to listen to native French speakers. In one lesson, pupils watched an appropriate DVD recording of French pupils stating their names.
- In some lessons, teachers use language learning strategies well. Pupils stated that cognates were used to help them remember new words.

Quality of the curriculum in primary languages

- All pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 learn French. The time allocated is suitable. Pupils have a weekly half hour lesson, with regular reinforcement of learning later in the week.
- The model of delivery is sustainable. Most classes are taught by class teachers and one is taught by an external specialist teacher.

- The scheme of work used by the school is appropriate and broadly meets the needs of learners. However, the assessment opportunities of the scheme are not fully exploited.
- Learning is supported satisfactorily by display. Pupils are able to access some useful French language websites.
- The curriculum is enriched by annual theme weeks. In the European week pupils celebrated five different languages and cultures. These theme weeks offer pupils opportunities to be creative in their learning, such as making models and designing new national flags.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in primary languages

- You and the senior leadership team are supportive of modern languages teaching and have supported the acting subject leader well.
- The rationale for choosing French is clear. Secondary school provision has been taken into account.
- In the unavoidable absence of the subject leader, the acting subject manager provides sound leadership for the subject. The rolling programme to introduce French into all classes in Key Stage 2 has been successfully continued.
- A policy for modern languages exists and there is also a brief action plan. Good links have been established with local high schools and a specialist teacher from one teaches one class.
- The subject leader has attended training courses and also run courses within school for all teaching staff to develop their language skills.
- The monitoring of teaching and learning is at an early stage of development as are assessment procedures.

Progress towards entitlement in Key Stage 2

This is satisfactory. There is a clear rationale for the teaching of French and an effective model of delivery. ICT is used well to enhance learning. Both boys and girls have positive attitudes towards learning languages. Assessment and recording of pupils' progress are at an early stage of development.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- providing opportunities for older pupils to develop their skills in reading, and particularly in writing
- developing assessment and recording procedures so that pupils, the school and secondary schools have a clear picture of the level of pupils' skills

- developing pupils' intercultural understanding and their appreciation of the usefulness of 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