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Mr D Ellis
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Ellis

Ofsted survey inspection programme – modern languages (ML)

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 3 November 2009 to look at work in modern languages.

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 included interviews with staff and two groups of pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation and observation of two lessons.

Achievement in primary languages

- Pupils' achievement across all four skills is satisfactory considering the very limited time they have been learning French. They have made good progress in speaking and listening.
- Pupils enjoy learning French and this is particularly apparent in the attitudes of pupils in Years 3 and 4 who show a real inquisitiveness about this new subject. A few pupils in Years 5 and 6 are less responsive to French.

- Pupils have good accents and have good recall of previously learned language. The younger pupils can recite, with accuracy, some long rhymes.
- Pupils are developing a good understanding of how the language is structured and how they might best learn.
- They have, as yet, a limited understanding of the cultural significance of language learning.

Quality of teaching of primary languages

- The quality of teaching is good. There is a good balance between praise and control and the teacher has established a good learning environment where enjoyment flourishes.
- The teacher's subject knowledge is good and she sets a good example for her pupils. Occasionally, she uses English to tell rather than model what she wants pupils to do in French and this limits pupils' exposure to the language.
- Lessons are lively and the teacher makes good use of a range of activities and resources to reinforce the new language.
- The teacher uses informal assessment regularly and well to check on pupils' understanding. Plans for more formal assessment are well considered but have not yet been put into practice.
- Lessons have appropriate overall learning objectives but it is not always clear how some of the more linguistically complex activities are helping pupils meet those objectives.

Quality of the curriculum in primary languages

- Planning is based on a commercial scheme of work which is being appropriately tailored to the language needs of the pupils. As the teacher is using the first stages of the programme for both classes, there has been a need to consider the maturity levels of the older pupils. This has been effective in most cases.
- There is a good time allocation for each of the classes, but the new language is not reinforced at other times during the week.
- The teacher is aware of the need to consider how she will develop medium- and longer-term planning in the context of the mixed-age classes in the school.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in primary languages

- This is satisfactory at both senior leadership and subject coordinator level.
- The headteacher is supporting the coordinator well and values the manner in which she has introduced the language in the school and enthused the pupils.

- Good support is also being given to the professional development needs of the coordinator, with the school making the most of local authority training and networking.
- Development planning for the subject is not yet in place but there has been some monitoring of teaching and learning in the subject.
- Transition arrangements at subject level are not yet developed.

Progress towards entitlement in Key Stage 2

Progress towards entitlement is satisfactory. All pupils in Key Stage 2 learn a modern language. However, all are beginners so all four skills have not yet been developed evenly. The commitment of the teacher and her good teaching skills provide a sound footing for this to develop further and the pupils' enthusiasm is further evidence of the secure start made. The school leadership and the governing body support the introduction of ML but this has not been an area of focus in the school's improvement planning.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- considering the rationale for a school-wide approach to the teaching of French
- curricular planning for the future for the mixed-age groups
- ensuring that all activities contribute to the learning objectives for the lessons.

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

Anne Looney
Her Majesty's Inspector