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11 December 2009

Mrs J Duckworth
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Duckworth

Ofsted 2009-10 survey inspection programme: modern languages (ML)

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 1 December 2009 to look at work in 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.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included interviews with staff and two groups of pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, observation of four lessons and an assembly.

Achievement in primary languages

- Pupils love learning languages. They are extremely enthusiastic for all aspects. It makes an excellent contribution to their personal development.
- They respond very well to teachers' instructions in the target languages.
- They listen very attentively and can produce simple conversations in French and Spanish.
- Pupils can read simple text and deduce meaning using clues and context from an early age. Writing is at the rudimentary stage of copying simple words.

- Pupils use thinking skills in quite a sophisticated way to confidently carry out tasks. This was particularly evident in a Year 3 lesson where the starter activity was to group different cards in any way pairs saw fit. This resulted in different outcomes which then underpinned the lesson.
- Their knowledge about language is developing well with good links to literacy. Their intercultural understanding of the countries and communities of the languages they are learning is less well-developed.

Quality of teaching of primary languages

- The quality of teaching is excellent. Teachers use their very good knowledge of primary methodology to support their teaching of an ML.
- Planning is very good and, along with the deployment of learning support assistants, it ensures that groups are catered for well.
- The classroom teachers' use of the target languages is developing well. They use DVDs to support this. Therefore, pupils' pronunciation is good.
- Lessons are very lively and pace is excellent. There is a great deal accomplished in a short time.
- In some lessons, assessment for learning was evident, particularly where mini plenary sessions took place throughout lessons. There is also evidence of 'can do' statements in pupils' work. In a Year 6 class, the teacher is piloting the use of an external assessment system.

Quality of the curriculum in primary languages

- The school follows external written schemes of work. There are times when these need to be adapted to the individual lesson more.
- French is taught across Key Stage 2 with the exception of one Year 6 class who learn Spanish, and there are weekly taster lessons in Key Stage 1.
- The time the school has set aside for each class to study an ML across the term/year is suitable. However, it is apparent that pupils do not always receive the time allotted. The school has a flexible timetable which enables staff to implement lessons at different times. However, this should not prevent each class receiving its allocated time for ML.
- ML is part of the school's 'Understanding Communities' development which adds to the rich variety of international understanding. The school has its intermediate International Schools Award. Different home languages are celebrated in school.
- The school has a recent link with a school in France which is enabling pupils to correspond, see a purpose to their learning, and provides a variety of lesson content and additional resources.
- Despite this, pupils' knowledge and understanding of the countries and communities where French and Spanish are spoken are currently limited.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in primary languages

- Senior leadership is very committed to embedding ML in the school and, with the coordinator, has made great strides in doing so.
- The ML policy is good. School planning shows an awareness of the priorities and subject planning looks to tackle these.
- The dimension in which the school places ML, 'Understanding Communities' is excellent.
- Classroom teachers teach ML in Key Stage 2 and pupils really like this aspect of provision. Staff have very good access to training and are supported well by the local authority.
- ML already sits within the school's monitoring and evaluation cycle.
- There are links with secondary schools but transfer of information is not yet established.
- A Year 6 teacher is a teacher-governor link for ML.

Progress towards entitlement in Key Stage 2

Progress towards entitlement is good. All Key Stage 2 pupils learn a language and Key Stage 1 pupils have taster lessons in French and German. Lessons are taught by classroom teachers which is the policy in the school. Both boys and girls are equally enthusiastic and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities do well. There is some monitoring of teaching. Assessment has begun but it is not yet embedded and writing is at a low level of development.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- accelerating the development of writing for the older and more able pupils
- monitoring the provision of time given to languages across Key Stage 2 to ensure that all pupils receive the minimum the school has planned
- increasing pupils' intercultural knowledge and understanding of the countries and communities of the languages they are learning.

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

Pam Haezewindt
Her Majesty's Inspector