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Mrs E Wright  
Acting headteacher  
St Thomas More Catholic Primary School  
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Dear Mrs Wright

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

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 12 January 2010 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 and observation of two lessons.

#### Achievement in primary languages

- Pupils have a good understanding of grammar. They understand that accents affect the pronunciation of words, can recognise and form plurals and can explain the genders.
- The progress made by pupils in the lessons observed was good.
- Pupils have a good general vocabulary. Their pronunciation is satisfactory and some is good. Listening skills are well developed. In lessons, they listen well when new vocabulary is introduced. Reading and writing skills are developing well. Pupils throughout Key Stage 2 are able to write words and sentences and to write longer passages. In a good lesson in a Year 3/4 class, pupils wrote a letter in Spanish to 'los Rejes Magos.'

- Pupils' intercultural understanding is good. They know about key festivals, where Spanish is spoken in the world and could explain how the hot weather in Spain affects the working and school day.
- Pupils appreciate the usefulness of learning a language. They know it can be helpful when travelling, such as when ordering breakfast, and is helpful in jobs such as teaching, translating and tourism. They know that learning a language also develops general knowledge of the world, people and cultures.
- Pupils enjoy learning Spanish. Behaviour was good in the lessons observed and Spanish makes a good contribution to their personal development.

#### Quality of teaching of primary languages

- The teacher's subject knowledge and pronunciation are good. New concepts are explained and modelled well. Pupils' pronunciation is carefully and sensitively corrected. Good use is made of the target language in lessons and in marking. There is explicit teaching of grammar, sound spelling links and language-learning strategies.
- Good links are made with other areas of the curriculum, such as healthy eating and religious education.
- Planning is comprehensive and teaching activities take into account previous learning and the needs of older and younger pupils in mixed ability classes. Effective provision is made for pupils who have been absent and for those who are new to learning Spanish.
- Pupils have opportunities to hear authentic speakers and Spanish songs via the internet, DVDs and CDs. There is scope to provide more opportunities to practise speaking and more challenge for the most able pupils. Occasionally, some activities last too long.
- Plenary sessions are used to reinforce new learning and some informal assessment takes place.

#### Quality of the curriculum in primary languages

- The time allocated for learning Spanish is good. However, there is little reinforcement of learning outside of formal Spanish lessons because new learning is not followed up sufficiently by class teachers.
- Spanish was introduced in 2006 and is taught by an external specialist. All pupils from Reception to Year 6 learn Spanish.
- The scheme of work followed by the school meets the interests and needs of pupils.
- Learning is supported satisfactorily by some displays of useful vocabulary and by some books about Spanish-speaking countries.
- There are, as yet, few extra-curricular activities that extend pupils' understanding and knowledge of languages.

## Effectiveness of leadership and management in primary languages

- You are very supportive of languages and have a clear view of the strengths and weaknesses of the subject, based on an audit of provision. The school's development plan includes a section on the long-term vision for languages and on how this will be achieved.
- Monitoring of languages has been introduced and each class has been observed. There is scope for observations to be more detailed.
- The rationale for teaching Spanish is sound and parental preferences were taken into account when it was introduced in 2006.
- The model of delivery that has been adopted by the school is effective. The school is realistic about its long-term sustainability and has plans to strengthen this aspect and further improve provision.
- Links with two secondary schools have been initiated. Information and communication technology has been used effectively with one of these schools to develop pupils' use of Spanish.
- Assessment of pupils' progress is at an early stage of development.

## Progress towards entitlement in Key Stage 2

This is good. All pupils in Key Stage 2 learn Spanish. Teaching and learning are good and include explicit teaching of reading and writing. Pupils are beginning to develop their knowledge about languages. Both boys and girls are equally well-motivated in learning Spanish.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- increasing opportunities for pupils to practise speaking in lessons
- improving the curriculum by developing displays, extra-curricular opportunities and reading provision
- developing opportunities for the reinforcement of Spanish outside of formal 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

Michael McIlroy  
Her Majesty's Inspector