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Mr S Playford
Principal
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Dear Mr Playford

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

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and students, during my visit on 15 and 16 March 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 take-up in Key Stage 4, and the use of information and communication technology (ICT) to improve language learning.

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 students, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work and observation of five lessons.

The overall effectiveness of ML is satisfactory.

Achievement in languages

Achievement in languages is satisfactory.

- In 2009, standards at the end of Years 9, 11 and 13 were broadly average. Boys and girls achieved similar outcomes except at GCSE grades A* or A where girls were significantly stronger.
- Students make satisfactory progress in all key stages. Achievement in the four skills is uneven. Although they acquire good skills in listening, reading and writing, students are least confident and make least progress in speaking. The youngest students said they spend too much time writing

and reflect positively on the speaking activities they enjoyed in primary school.

- Students' enjoyment and understanding of the value of learning languages increase significantly as they progress through the college. A few older students demonstrate great enthusiasm for extending language learning beyond the classroom. Younger students do not demonstrate great enthusiasm for extending language learning beyond the classroom.
- Some Key Stage 4 students read local newspapers and magazines while in the country of origin and know about the availability of books in ML in the school library. Sixth-form students use the internet regularly for interest and research and listen to music and cds in target languages.
- Key Stage 3 and 4 students understand the potential value of languages in their future careers. Students appreciate the background studies in Year 9, which give them an understanding of the culture of the languages they learn. However, all say that experiences in the country itself are the most valuable.
- Sixth-form students engage in a deep understanding of the country in their work, their research and their visits.

Quality of teaching in languages

The quality of teaching in languages is satisfactory.

- Teachers' subject knowledge is good and sometimes outstanding. Some aspects of teaching methodology are good: lessons are planned well using assessment information and these lessons are based on a wide variety of activities. However, speaking activities are not producing sufficiently high standards because students are not prepared thoroughly enough for speaking tasks and to speak spontaneously. Teachers speak in English too often and this is then adopted by students whose speaking in the target language relies too heavily on reading prepared work.
- Activities enable students to hear and read in the target language and develop good comprehension skills.
- A few students take the opportunity to enjoy languages beyond the classroom experience by reading books in the library and faculty. Other students take advantage of lunch-time clubs, and language experiences offered at other schools.
- Homework is an appropriate extension of work covered in school.
- Assessment is satisfactory overall. Use of assessment data is beginning to develop well and is being applied successfully to the planning and delivery of lessons. Teachers refer to students' levels during lessons. Older students understand their achievement and targets. However, assessment of individual pupils does not define progress by each of the four skills.
- Marking is satisfactory but is variable in quality. The best is supported by precise targets for improvement. The least effective consists of little more

than correcting errors and inconsistency in setting targets, some of which are not sharply focused on defined areas for language improvement.

Quality of the curriculum in languages

The quality of the curriculum in languages is satisfactory.

- The school is using the revised Key Stage 3 framework. Schemes of work are in place for Key Stage 3 but are insufficiently focused on the four skills.
- A suitable amount of time is allocated for teaching a single language. Currently, despite encouragement, very few students follow examination courses in more than one language. Students say that they would like the opportunity to learn a wider range of languages.
- Accreditation is through GCSE, AS and A2 levels. Although some alternative routes were tried, they have not been sustained.
- Students say they are supported very well to take up a language in Key Stage 4. They receive year, group and individual information and encouragement. As a result, they understand what their course will be like. Students considering learning a language post-16 are similarly well-supported. They receive full information and are invited to join in a post-16 lesson before choosing. The school emphasises career, academic and social advantages of sixth-form ML study.
- Extra-curricular provision is good. A wide range of activities and trips abroad supports learning, improvement and enjoyment.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in languages

The effectiveness of the leadership and management in languages is satisfactory

- Support for languages from the senior leadership team (SLT) is strong; a link SLT member supports the department. You are committed to the subject's improvement.
- Subject management is good. Day-to-day organisation of the department is of a very high quality.
- The rationale for language teaching is not as strong and there have been a number of short-term changes.
- The faculty is well resourced except for regular access to ICT provision.
- The faculty and SLT monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching and learning in ML; standards and achievement are monitored through the SLT link and review processes.
- The faculty has a self-evaluation process and has a satisfactory view of its work.
- Support for ML development in primary schools has been good. Glossopdale is now actively supporting only one school as others have

become self-sufficient. This support has come from both teachers and students. Glossopdale is currently planning a revised Key Stage 3 languages programme to take closer account of its students' prior learning experiences.

Take-up in Key Stage 4

The take-up of languages in Key Stage 4 is currently well below the benchmark of 50% set by the Secretary of State. Year 9 option choices show that the school is likely to reach 50% take-up in Year 10 in 2010/11.

The use of ICT to improve language learning

This is satisfactory.

- ICT facilities in the college are restricted; the ML faculty has made appropriate use of limited resources. Students' access to ICT in learning ML is particularly limited in Key Stage 3.
- Opportunities are increased at Key Stage 4 and sixth-form students rely heavily on the internet for research and access to areas of interest in their chosen language/s.
- The faculty has taken a lead in teachers' and students' use of interactive whiteboards and this aspect of teaching and learning is developing as a model for the whole school.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- increasing teachers' use of the target language in teaching to raise students' speaking standards, particularly to build on students' primary school experiences
- improving marking to the standard of the best practice, thereby ensuring that students have focused, achievable targets for improvement
- continuing to improve take-up in Key Stage 4.

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

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

Yours sincerely

Peter McKenzie
Additional Inspector