

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 0300 123 1231
F 020 7421 6855
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



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Mrs J Wilkinson
Headteacher
St Francis Catholic Primary School
The Hill
Horns Lane
Goosnargh
PR3 2FJ

Dear Mrs Wilkinson

Ofsted 2010–11 subject survey inspection programme: modern languages (ML)

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and pupils, during my visit on 7 June 2010 to look at work in ML.

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 without their consent.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included: interviews with nominated staff and two groups of pupils; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work; and observation of two lessons and a Spanish language club.

Achievement in languages

- In the lessons observed, pupils' progress was good. Their reading skills are well developed. They can read and understand French sentences in worksheets and from displays on electronic whiteboards. Older pupils can read and understand longer passages of French text.
- Pupils' speaking skills are good. Younger pupils in Key Stage 2 know a range of key phrases and older pupils can hold short conversations. In one lesson, older pupils confidently asked questions in French of another who was in the 'hotseat' acting out the role of a pupil in Mali. However, there are some gaps in pupils' basic vocabulary.
- Listening skills are good. Pupils listen carefully to their teachers and to French songs and French language by native speakers on CDs.

- Writing skills are developing satisfactorily. Pupils write individual words in worksheets and can write longer sentences in their books. However, older pupils do not yet write at more length.
- Pupils enjoy learning French and are keen to continue studying languages at high school. They like the variety of activities in lessons, such as songs, role-play and games in which they participate enthusiastically. They behave well in lessons.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how languages can contribute to their future economic well-being. They could cite a range of jobs, such as ski-instructor, politician and aid-worker, where languages are useful.
- Pupils' intercultural understanding is generally good. They have a good knowledge of French foods and tourist sights and could name a number of countries in Africa and the Americas where French is spoken.

Quality of teaching in languages

- Teachers' subject knowledge and pronunciation are good. The target language is used appropriately which ensures good experience for the pupils. Planning matches activities to pupils' different abilities, and also takes account of different age groups in classes. Less able pupils are generally well supported by additional adults.
- Grammar teaching is good, such as when teaching the different genders and adjectival agreement. Sound spelling links, such as how 'ch' is pronounced in French are also taught well.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) is used well to introduce new concepts and words. In one lesson, it was used adroitly to show pupils what everyday life and schooling are like in a French-speaking country in Africa. Pupils reported that they had used ICT to film their re-enactments of a French café setting.
- A good range of strategies is used to make learning interesting and enjoyable. However, some activities last too long. Teachers check pupils' understanding regularly. Marking of pupils' work gives good guidance on spelling.
- Plenary sessions are not exploited fully to practise and reinforce new vocabulary and concepts and to eliminate misconceptions and mispronunciations.

Quality of the curriculum in languages

- Medium-term planning is good. It is based on the QCA scheme of work and links well to the school's creative curriculum, including subjects such as literacy and geography. The wide range of activities meets pupils' needs well and offers good opportunities for them to use French creatively in community activities, such as assemblies and Christmas concerts.
- The time allocated for learning French is good. Within the school's creative curriculum there are also opportunities for some pupils to learn Spanish.

- There are supportive displays in classrooms and a good level of resources, although there are few French language books or comics for pupils to browse for pleasure.
- A very good range of extra-curricular and enhancement activities includes: visitors from other cultures; French cheerleading and dance sessions; opportunities to interview a French footballer; and opportunities for some older pupils to learn another language as part of a national competition.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in languages

- The well-founded rationale for the teaching of French reflects what pupils will study in secondary school. You and the subject leader provide good leadership of the subject and the latter leads by example in teaching French. The entitlement of pupils in Key Stage 2 to learn a foreign language has been well implemented.
- The school's improvement planning includes ML. The effectiveness of the subject has been audited, although there is scope to develop this.
- Teachers' professional development is well supported. Following changes in staffing, the school has been able to successfully change its model of how French is delivered to pupils.
- Pupils' learning is assessed and their progress in French is reported to parents. The formal monitoring of teaching and learning is at an early stage of development.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- providing more opportunities for older pupils to write at length
- developing the use of plenary sessions to consolidate or check learning
- developing formal processes for the monitoring of teaching and learning.

I hope that 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 and will be published on the Ofsted website under the URN for your school. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Michael McIlroy
Her Majesty's Inspector