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Mrs D Nulty
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Nulty

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 10 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 you and with two groups of pupils; scrutiny of relevant documentation; and analysis of pupils' work. Three lessons were observed and a brief visit was made to a talk to pupils given by a French visitor.

Achievement in languages

- In the lessons observed, pupils' progress was satisfactory overall. Speaking skills are satisfactory. Pupils know key words and phrases and older pupils can ask and answer simple questions. However, their pronunciation is underdeveloped.
- Writing skills are developing satisfactorily. Pupils can write simple sentences, for example, in letters to pen pals, but some spelling is inaccurate. Listening skills are good. Pupils generally listen well in class and most respond eagerly to questions.
- Reading is developing satisfactorily. Pupils can read individual words and sentences and older pupils use some strategies to decode, understand and translate longer texts.
- Pupils' intercultural understanding is adequate. They know some French foods, Christmas customs and can name some countries beyond France,

such as Canada, where French is spoken. Older pupils can name a number of tourist sights in Paris.

- Pupils' understanding of the usefulness of languages for their future economic well-being is satisfactory. They know languages can be useful on holiday, for greeting visitors to this country and in careers such as teaching and in the airline industry.
- Pupils enjoy learning languages. They like the different activities in lessons, such as games and songs, and enjoy learning about another culture. Their behaviour in lessons is satisfactory.

Quality of teaching in languages

- Teachers' subject knowledge is satisfactory overall. Some pronunciation is weak but this will improve with training and practice. The target language is used adequately. In some classes, however, too much English is spoken which deprives pupils of exposure to French.
- An adequate range of resources and activities is used to motivate pupils and retain their interest. Some activities last too long. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used satisfactorily to introduce learning objectives and vocabulary, reinforce learning and to play French songs.
- There is some good teaching of grammar. In one lesson, the teacher used the interactive whiteboard well to carefully explain that adjectives usually follow nouns in French. In a Spanish lesson, pupils were reminded of the different forms of the indefinite article.
- Planning is sound and sets out how less able pupils will be supported by additional adults. The opening sections of lessons build appropriately on previous learning but some plenary sessions are not always long enough and do not reinforce new learning sufficiently.
- Assessment is used well. Written work is marked satisfactorily and there is some good use of questioning to check understanding. In one lesson, key teaching points were appropriately repeated when the teacher saw that pupils not had understood new vocabulary about animals.

Quality of the curriculum in languages

- French has been taught formally to all pupils in Key Stage 2 since early 2009. Pupils in Year 6 are taught some Spanish by a teacher from a local high school.
- Activities in lessons, based on two schemes of work, meet pupils' interests. However, no overall curriculum plan is in place to ensure that topics are taught systematically.
- The time allocated for learning French is adequate. There is suitable reinforcement of learning outside lesson times and through homework. However, pupils reported that ML was not always taught regularly in some year groups.

- Supportive displays in classrooms focus on key topics. The library has a good range of French language books which pupils can read for pleasure. Dictionaries are available for older pupils to use.
- The curriculum is enriched by opportunities for older pupils to learn Spanish, a French Week and visits by a representative of the locality's twin town who teaches pupils about life in France.
- Links with a French school provide opportunities for pupils to develop their creativity through writing letters to pen pals and creating computer presentations about themselves.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in languages

- In your role of acting subject leader, you are very supportive of languages learning. A policy for ML is in place and French features in the school's improvement plan. A new subject leader has been appointed, who will take up post shortly, and a brief action plan has been drawn up.
- You have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of ML. You have introduced the French Week, strengthened links with high schools and developed the link with a French school.
- Some recent steps have been taken to audit provision and to introduce assessments of pupils' attainment. Monitoring of teaching and learning is at an early stage of development. Some training has been provided for staff, mainly in the use of new ICT programs. Some staff have been able to observe good practice in the teaching of ML.
- The implementation of pupils' entitlement to learn a foreign language in Key Stage 2 is satisfactory. All pupils in Key Stage 2 learn French although there are some inconsistencies in provision.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- providing training to develop teachers' subject knowledge and pronunciation to help improve pupils' pronunciation
- developing formal monitoring of teaching, learning and the curriculum
- developing the use of plenary sessions.

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 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