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Mrs J Young
Acting Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Young

Ofsted 2011–12 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 29 November 2011 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 staff and pupils; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work; examination of displays around the school and observation of two lessons.

The overall effectiveness of ML is good.

Achievement in ML

Achievement in ML is good.

- Pupils value and enjoy learning languages and understand that it is important to do so.
- All groups of pupils respond to questions and instructions in French confidently and with good pronunciation. They are able to follow French spoken at near normal speed.
- They are starting to be able to understand and apply grammatical rules in short exercises and when speaking, but even the most able have few opportunities to write at length. Role plays and drama provide opportunities to be creative with language and they produce imaginative display work.

- Less able pupils have a relatively weak understanding of the link between sounds and spellings in French.
- Pupils' cultural understanding is good because the support for its development is woven through the scheme of work for French and because they are given good opportunities to use information and communication technology for research.

Quality of teaching in ML

The quality of teaching in ML is good.

- Teachers use their skills as primary teachers to good effect in language lessons. Very good lesson plans ensure that teachers lead the learning through appropriate activities with a range of objectives identified for different levels of ability.
- Teachers are aware of the needs of all pupils and provide additional support where necessary, but sometimes miss opportunities to stretch the most able. Nevertheless, all pupils enjoy and appreciate the games and opportunities to work in pairs and groups which teachers regularly provide.
- Teachers make appropriate use of French to manage the lessons but they sometimes provide translations too quickly, which impedes the development of essential language learning skills such as guessing and inference.
- Very good resources, including new technology and authentic materials, are used well in lessons to develop pupils' intercultural understanding and to raise enjoyment.
- Teaching assistants provide good support for those needing additional help and lunchtime supervisors have learnt praise words so they can support ML learning.
- Formal assessment systems are being developed. In lessons, a satisfactory range of assessment techniques is used to check the learning and adjust their teaching as the lesson proceeds. This is weaker in the repetition exercises when new language is being introduced, because teachers sometimes require pupils to move to productive use of the language before they are sufficiently confident.

Quality of the curriculum in ML

The quality of the curriculum in ML is good.

- The pattern of provision ensures that all pupils have their full entitlement to ML. Schemes of work are clear, specifically with regard to progression, and include good opportunities for assessment.
- The use of a commercial course ensures good coverage of the requirements of the framework for ML and the school has adjusted and supplemented the course to ensure that it meets the needs of the school context.
- Pupils have experiences of other cultures through a variety of activities.

- The learning environment is very good and supports pupils' development well through displays that support their recall of language and structures and celebrate their achievements.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in ML

The effectiveness of leadership and management in ML is good.

- You and the subject leader are very clear about how you want ML to develop. The subject has a high profile in the school and resources for learning are good.
- Provision and practice are monitored regularly and the information gained is used to evaluate accurately the effectiveness of work in the subject. The subject development plan sets out the main priorities, but lacks a clear focus on developing the quality of teaching.
- Liaison arrangements with secondary schools ensure good transition for Year 6 pupils.
- Governors support the subject well and have useful expertise to help further developments. Together you have secured full entitlement for pupils in Key Stage 2.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- developing techniques in repetition exercises to allow more accurate assessment and identification of pupils' readiness to move on to productive use of the new language
- increasing the opportunities in lessons for pupils to develop language learning strategies

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

As explained previously, a copy of this letter will be published on the Ofsted website. It may be used to inform decisions about any future inspection. A copy of this letter is also being sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

Elaine Taylor
Her Majesty's Inspector