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Mr Slack
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Dear Mr Slack

Ofsted survey inspection programme – modern languages

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and those of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 10 October 2007 to look at work in modern languages (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. All feedback letters will be published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half-term.

Schools are expected to provide an entitlement for all pupils in Key Stage 2 to learn a modern language by 2010. As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of the subject, the visit had a particular focus on the progress the school is making towards entitlement.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included: interviews with staff and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, and observation of parts of six lessons and a registration activity in the Reception class.

Achievement and standards

French or Spanish is taught in all year groups although for some it has only been introduced recently. Standards are broadly average. Progress made by the pupils overall is good.

- Pupils listen well and respond to the teachers' instructions in French and Spanish, for example when playing physical response games.
- They recall words from previous sessions well.
- They try hard to copy their teacher's pronunciation.

- They are keen to speak, usually individual words, but some older pupils hold short conversations in French, developing social as well as language skills.
- Children in the Reception class were very proud of their achievement in recognising and responding to greetings in French, German and Welsh.
- They are keen to participate in speaking activities in lessons and view languages as a very useful skill to develop.
- Importantly, pupils are very excited about their current language-learning and are keen to learn more.

Quality of teaching and learning in ML

- All teachers in the school are involved in introducing French to their own classes, although most are at an early stage of learning, or revising, French or Spanish. Staff know their pupils well and are keen for them all to succeed in languages.
- Pupils particularly enjoy learning through songs and games.
- Pupils enjoy speaking activities and they say they would like to do more of this. Opportunities for them to do this independently of the teacher are limited at present.
- Teachers try hard to use as much French as possible in sessions.
- Some teachers are unsure of how to pronounce words themselves and it would be useful for them to use recordings and software to help pupils 'get it right'.
- Teachers develop pupils' social skills and intercultural understanding effectively, as well as their language skills.
- Teachers monitor individual pupils' learning and give lots of praise, they have a good idea of how well pupils are doing.
- There is scope to develop the reading of short texts for pleasure and to increase pupils' range of language in speaking and writing.

Quality of curriculum

- The school is offering all pupils, from Reception to Year 6, at least one weekly opportunity to learn French.
- The time spent is currently variable across classes, but there are short daily sessions in some classes and these are increasing as teachers become more confident.
- There is a scheme of work in place. The school has purchased course materials. The scope of the materials is limited, particularly for developing reading and speaking skills, and at present software is not compatible with hardware in use by the school. The school also has copies of the new QCA scheme of work and *The Key Stage 2 Framework for Languages* to support further planning.
- In the Reception class children are also learning to count and say basic words and phrases in languages other than French, for example German and Welsh. They are gaining a good understanding of the multilingual world and view this as great fun.

Leadership and management of ML

- There is a clear rationale for the introduction of languages into the school.
- All staff have been involved in the introduction of French and Spanish, and have been offered twilight training sessions held at a local specialist languages college, although this training has not yet begun.
- The subject coordinator also attends periodic professional development sessions held in the local authority (LA).
- Appropriate resources have been purchased.
- Languages are included in the school development plan.

Implementing languages entitlement

- Progress towards the implementation of languages entitlement is good.
- The school has made very good use of all external support available, and is now in a strong position to develop provision further.

Inclusion

- This is a strength.
- All pupils are involved in learning French or Spanish, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities.
- Similarly, all staff are involved, and there is a collective determination to make the initiative successful.
- Both boys and girls are keen to learn languages.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- developing a scheme of work, and identifying key learning outcomes for each year group
- continuing to develop staff expertise in both the French language and in how to teach the language
- increasing opportunities for pupils to use the languages themselves and for real purposes, and to read for pleasure.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop languages in the school. As I explained in my previous letter, a copy of this letter will be sent to your LA. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Judith Tolley
Additional Inspector