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Mrs R Firth
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Dear Mrs Firth

Ofsted survey inspection programme – implementing languages entitlement in primary schools

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and for the help of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 24 January to look at work in modern languages.

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 progress towards implementing languages entitlement.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included: interviews with staff and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of two lessons.

Achievement and standards

- Pupils in Year 4, who have been learning French for just over a term, have a secure grasp of a limited amount of vocabulary.
- They can use this knowledge in structured situations, for example to carry out simple arithmetic or to describe the colour of an object.
- Their pronunciation is very good. They have some understanding of the relationship between sounds and spelling.
- They know some facts about France.
- They have a good understanding of the value of learning a language.

- Their personal development in the subject is very good. They thoroughly enjoy their lessons, speak and sing in French with great confidence, are interested in foreign travel, and work with each other very supportively.

Quality of teaching and learning in modern languages

- Staff's subject knowledge is good for the classes they teach. They present pupils with a good model for pronouncing the language accurately.
- The teachers are enthusiastic and their lessons are lively. They use a good range of high quality resources and a variety of activities very effectively. Their lessons achieve a good balance of whole-class teaching and pair work.
- The pupils' response is excellent. They enjoy lessons, are eager to participate, concentrate hard and most make good progress.
- Lessons build on prior learning by enabling the pupils to use the vocabulary they have learned creatively, for example by using words for colours to write a song to the tune of 'London's Burning.'
- Although assessment of pupils' progress is not carried out or recorded formally, teachers monitor pupils' learning in lessons closely and intervene to provide additional support where necessary.
- However, the most able pupils are not challenged by the work and teachers do not speak French enough in lessons.

Quality of curriculum

- The school uses a commercial scheme of work which is linked to the objectives in the Key Stage 2 Framework and which suggests appropriate content and activities to help teachers with their planning. It has not been adapted to reflect the school's own vision and aims for the subject. For example, it does not describe how teachers are to make links with the rest of the curriculum, or how information and communication technology is to be used to support teaching and learning.
- The content is suitable for beginners but the pace it sets is too slow for the more able in Year 4.
- The partner secondary school has not been involved in planning the curriculum or in agreeing arrangements for transition between Key Stages 2 and 3.
- The school does not have a policy for exploiting and celebrating the linguistic diversity of its pupils.

Leadership and management of modern languages

- School leaders are highly committed to the subject; this is reflected in the good level of resources and the amount of professional development planned for staff.

- The subject's policy statement is suitable and reflects the school's current position and intentions.
- An action plan articulates a clear strategy for introducing French throughout Key Stage 2. It recognises the need to provide adequate training for staff. The emphasis is currently more on training staff to use the scheme than on ensuring their subject knowledge is adequate.
- Arrangements for monitoring and evaluating the subject are good. Recent observations of lessons contain pertinent insights into their strengths and weaknesses.
- The subject leader is an enthusiastic subject specialist. She is well informed about primary modern languages and has access to support networks and training opportunities. By collaborating closely with other staff she has established a good degree of consistency in the quality of teaching and the standards pupils achieve.

Implementing languages entitlement

- Implementing entitlement is satisfactory. At present only one year group is learning a language, but plans are underway to extend this to the whole of Key Stage 2 within a year.
- Earlier attempts to introduce the subject have been piecemeal. The current plan is to stage its introduction in a way that will necessitate annual changes to the curriculum.
- The cross-curricular links that are to be used as an opportunity to develop pupils' language skills are undeveloped.

Inclusion

- All pupils in one year group have equal access to French.
- Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported well in class, are fully involved in lessons, and make good progress.
- Boys and girls achieve equally well.
- The school improvement plan declares an intention to promote racial equality and cultural awareness but does not make clear the contribution that modern languages will make.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included to:

- raise teachers' expectations of the most able pupils
- adapt the scheme of work so that it reflects the school's own aims for the subject
- ensure that all staff who are going to teach French have adequate subject knowledge to do so.

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 local authority. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Derek Neil
Her Majesty's Inspector