

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404040
F 020 7421 6855
www.ofsted.gov.uk
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk



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Mr D Powell
Headteacher
Judgemeadow Community College
Marydene Drive
Evington
Leicester
LE5 6HP

Dear Mr Powell

Ofsted survey inspection programme – modern languages (ML)

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff and students, during my visit on 26-27 January to look at work in ML.

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of the subject, the visit had a particular focus on how information and communication technology (ICT) skills are developed to support work in 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.

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

The overall effectiveness of ML was judged to be outstanding.

Context

Judgemeadow Community College was designated a specialist language college in 1999. It caters for students aged 11 to 16.

Achievement and standards

Achievement is outstanding in most of the languages studied. Standards in languages are above average overall and well above average in French, the school's first foreign language, formally studied by all students in Key Stage 3.

- Key Stage 3 results are well above average. In addition, one group in each cohort studies French in the immersion stream, and GCSE results at the end of Year 9 are consistently high.

- Results in 2008 at GCSE, where almost all students were entered for at least one language, were above average in Spanish, well above average in French and broadly in line in the other languages taught. Results in AS French and GCSE Panjabi were lower than in other languages offered but still above average.
- Students are currently achieving very well in most languages, especially in French and Spanish. Students from different cultural backgrounds and of differing abilities perform equally well. Progress in all of the lessons observed was at least good, and often outstanding.
- Students listen and respond with enthusiasm in class. Their speaking skills are of a very high standard, and this is a significant strength. They speak extensively and with confidence. Pronunciation and intonation are very accurate. Reading and writing skills are also well developed.
- Students' understanding of grammatical structures is very impressive. For example, students in a Year 8 class, just beginning their second term of German, demonstrated a firm understanding of accusative case endings. Year 9 lower-attaining students used perfect and present tenses in French confidently and accurately.
- Students develop as language-learners very effectively and they are extremely positive about their progress. They rapidly become independent learners and use reference materials expertly. They organise their work efficiently, and can explain in detail how they are developing different areas of knowledge and skills.
- Their intercultural understanding is strong: students show great interest in each other's languages in this multilingual school, enjoying spotting similarities and showing consistent respect for differences.
- Students understand the importance of language-learning and appreciate the choices within the subject in their school.

Quality of teaching and learning in ML

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding overall, with no lessons observed less than good.

- Teachers have excellent working relationships with their students and this creates a very positive learning environment in classrooms. The languages team is highly skilled and this results in very high levels of engagement by learners. No-one is left out. In one class, for example, two students who had been absent through illness were brought into activities and their peers enjoyed helping them 'catch up'.
- Teachers' planning is a significant strength of languages work at Judgemeanow. Highly detailed medium and long-term plans chart students' language journey very clearly. As a result, teachers are very clear about expected outcomes. They plan individual lessons very thoroughly and a strong feature of this planning is a requirement to demonstrate not just 'what' will be taught but also 'why' – the specific intentions for each activity. Teachers are therefore able to share learning objectives very clearly with their students. As a result of this,

students know exactly what they are expected to achieve in the course of a lesson, and this leads to very high rates of progress.

- Teaching ensures that students are stimulated by lively and engaging resources. This results in high levels of motivation. Games and successive lively activities ensure that students maintain concentration; not a moment is lost and students learn to their maximum potential.
- Teachers use the target language for most parts of the lesson and this leads to a very high level of challenge and excitement in learning.
- Teachers plan work very carefully with foreign language assistants, and students value highly the extra support they receive from their presence in the classroom. Additional one-to-one and small group opportunities to develop listening and speaking skills are very effective in maintaining students' motivation.
- Most teachers give high-quality written feedback to their students, and curriculum targets are clear and motivating. The quality of this feedback is not yet fully consistent across the team, but rigorous monitoring and training are developing this very well.

Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is outstanding.

- All students study French in Year 7 and they then have a wide choice of a second foreign language for Year 8: German, Gujarati, Panjabi or Spanish. All students continue with two languages until the end of Year 9. As many students in the school are bilingual when they arrive in Year 7, this rich choice of both European and community languages prepares them very well for future language learning.
- Students who join the immersion class in Year 7 have to make a commitment to continuing this work over three years, as the course is highly structured. ICT and citizenship are learned through the medium of French, with students working in discrete tutor groups in a mini-'section bilingue'. This course is very popular and highly valued by students.
- All students continue with at least one language to GCSE. There is currently no accreditation offered to those students who discontinue their study of their second foreign language at the end of Year 9.
- Almost all students achieve a GCSE in at least one language by the end of Year 11. Bilingual students are offered opportunities to gain accreditation in their home or heritage languages.
- Those students who have gained a GCSE in French in Year 9 have the opportunity to study AS Level French in Years 10 and 11. The first cohort took this examination in summer 2008. As results were disappointing, the school has rightly recognised that a review of entry requirements, course content and key elements of teaching and learning of this course is now a priority.
- The school offers a wealth of extra-curricular languages activities, including short visits abroad for younger students and home-stay visits with well established partner schools abroad for older students. Students value these opportunities highly and describe in a very

mature and sophisticated way how the visits develop their social and cultural understanding.

Leadership and management of ML

Leadership and management are outstanding and lead to very high outcomes.

- One relative newcomer to this large languages department spoke for all when she said 'There's real teamwork within this department'. The outstanding, very experienced head of department leads by example and models good teaching practice as she trains her team. Consequently, she has developed a highly skilled team which seeks continuous improvement.
- This relentless pursuit of improvement, and of ever more exciting ways of engaging students, has led to the development of excellent resources. These are shared very effectively across the team, to ensure that all students have access to equally good learning experiences. An advanced skills teacher also shares good practice within the team, as well as providing outreach support in other schools in the City.
- Departmental leaders monitor the work of teachers and learners in an exceptionally consistent and rigorous way. For example, students' work is sampled on a regular basis and teachers receive both oral and written feedback on strengths and areas for development in their marking.
- Accommodation and resources are excellent, and destined to become even better when the school's new building opens shortly. All rooms are equipped with interactive whiteboards and there is a dedicated multi-media room for languages.
- Some of the department's language teachers offer regular outreach teaching and training in a number of 'feeder' primary schools. This enables the languages team to have a good understanding of students' achievements and needs when they arrive in Year 7. The school works closely with the City's languages coordinators and is aware of the need to monitor and evaluate progress across schools in the run-up to 2011.

How close the school is to reaching the benchmarks for language take-up in Key Stage 4

- Almost all students in this specialist language college continue with at least one language into Key Stage 4. Almost all achieve success at GCSE in one language, and many in two.

Information and communication technology

This is outstanding.

- ICT is used very well to give students clear models of language and to enable them to practise in lively and entertaining ways. All teachers in the language team use electronic whiteboards to present new language and activities. Most use this facility in innovative and highly

creative ways, enabling students to work interactively and develop their understanding of language in challenging, fast-paced and very enjoyable ways.

- Language games are highly developed and almost all lessons observed included activities where students competed against the clock. Expert class'. As students are carefully grouped for these activities, they support each other fully and so all are winners!
- Students' very good understanding of grammatical structures is a clear outcome of this high level, interactive work. One lesson ended with the focus grammar points for the lesson encapsulated in a delightful animated short story. One of the students stated, as she left the room, that she intended to try it out for herself through the internet that evening.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- bringing Year 11 outcomes in all courses and languages up to the very high levels achieved in French and Spanish
- reviewing the Key Stage 4 AS French course to ensure that these high-performing students are effectively prepared for future language-learning post-16
- developing accreditation for those students who complete their two-year second foreign language course at the end of Year 9.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop ML 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.

Ofsted gathers information on the immediate and longer-term impact of survey inspections, both on the institutions themselves, and with a view to improving its own processes. To this end, I should be grateful if you would complete the attached questionnaire and return it within the next ten days. We have also just sent a copy of the questionnaire by email. Please return your completed questionnaire to either the email or postal address on the form, not to me. We may also contact some schools by telephone after several months in order for us to gain a picture of longer-term impact. Thank you in advance for your assistance.

Yours sincerely

Anne Feltham
Her Majesty's Inspector