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Mrs A Myatt
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Myatt

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 19 March 2009 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 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 three lessons.

Context

French was introduced into Year 3 in 2006 and has now reached Year 5. The school has been involved with the local authority (LA) in developing material to deliver French.

Achievement

- The progress all pupils made in lessons observed was good and it was clear that they had learned a lot and that most could speak on several topics. Some older pupils could manipulate the language so that they could make quite complex sentences.

- Generally, all pupils' speaking and listening is developing very well; teaching ensures good pronunciation; memorisation techniques help pupils to retain what they learn.
- There is some reading through listening and matching, but overall it is limited with pupils having few opportunities to show their understanding of text through using language learning strategies.
- They are beginning to write words and phrases to underpin their speaking and express meaning. Work is well-presented.
- Pupils enjoy learning French a lot. They are very well behaved in lessons and participate very well. They like the variety of activities they do such as singing, and how their class teachers follow up work and give them instructions in French.
- They think it is important to learn a language because of visiting other countries and talking to native speakers, for example on holiday. They are less clear of its importance in terms of their futures.

Quality of teaching and learning in ML

The quality of teaching and learning was good.

- Pupils are expected to speak without support and they do so readily.
- There is good drawing out of pupils' prior knowledge to get them to deduce meaning.
- Teaching puts very good emphasis on good pronunciation.
- In Years 4 and 5 lessons there was a good sequence of activities to ensure pupils matched old and new language, underpinning it with the written word so that pupils could read it and make a sentence or question and answer.
- The actions pupils use to denote understanding help the teacher to assess what they know.
- 'Can do' statements were introduced last year for self-assessment and are being amended in the light of evaluation. Further to this, more formal assessment is being investigated for use this year.
- So far, reading books has not been a strong feature of development.
- There is scope for extending the amount of French used for everyday interaction, such as praise; and for extending display in classrooms so that it underpins work in lessons, for example: the date, days of the week, months, seasons and storylines.

Quality of curriculum

- Currently French is taught by a native speaker teaching assistant to Years 3, 4 and 5. It is also taught in Key Stage 1 where pupils are captivated by it. Year 6 will begin next year, thus enabling the school to deliver entitlement in Key Stage 2 by 2009/10.
- Teachers are attending training so that more can deliver the discreet lessons, and follow up after lessons, and so that the model becomes fully sustainable.

- Pupils have suitable time: a 30 minute discreet lesson followed up by some work in other lessons, for example, science, mathematics, religious education.
- Pupils enjoy French very much and for the most part programmes and activities support learners' needs. Schemes of work follow the LA's lesson plans and are based on the Key Stage 2 Framework. Progression is clear. So far the school places insufficient emphasis on reading and intercultural understanding

Leadership and management of ML

- There has been a lot of support for teaching languages in the school and implementation is well under way.
- The designated co-ordinator has a strong ML policy and supports the native speaker teaching assistant on a regular basis as well as keeping staff well informed.
- She attends very regularly LA meetings and professional development (CPD) to support the initiative and is fully aware of areas to develop including monitoring and evaluation and liaison with secondary schools.
- CPD for French for other members of staff is written into development plans. There are close links with the LA languages consultant.
- There is a satisfactory bank of resources but it contains few reading books.
- The co-ordinator is investigating links with other countries and how they can be developed to improve intercultural understanding.

Implementing languages entitlement

- Implementing entitlement is good.
- There is a sound rationale for introducing French and the school is working its way steadily towards an effective model for delivery.
- Apart from Year 6 all pupils in Key Stage 2 study French for a suitable time each week.
- Overall, teaching and learning are good; lesson content includes some explicit teaching of writing but that of reading and intercultural understanding has not yet been well developed.
- Pupils have some knowledge about language; there is scope to develop language learning strategies.
- Both boys and girls have excellent attitudes towards ML and are equally motivated.
- Assessment has begun; it is still at an early stage but developing well.
- The school is aware that it must liaise with its secondary schools next year when its pupils will have a minimum of four years of French when they transfer.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- introducing more explicit reading and intercultural awareness into pupils' learning
- ensuring French is spoken routinely as much as possible in lessons, for example for praise, questions, instructions
- extending the display in classrooms and around school to support pupils' development and help them see parallels between English and French.

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

Pam Haezewindt
Subject Adviser for Languages
Her Majesty's Inspector