

Aviation House  
125 Kingsway  
London  
WC2B 6SE

T 0300 123 1231  
F 020 7421 6855  
[enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)



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Mr G Jones  
Headteacher  
Holywell Church of England Primary School  
Tawstock  
Barnstaple  
Devon  
EX31 3HZ

Dear Mr Jones

Ofsted 2009-10 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 1 March 2010 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 well the school is implementing entitlement in Key Stage 2.

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.

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

#### Achievement in languages

- Pupils in Years 4 to 6 have had a full year of learning French plus a little work in prior years and they are able to respond to simple rhymes, stories and songs as well as understand instructions from their teacher. Their pronunciation is mostly accurate and they generally read aloud well. They are beginning to be able to ask and answer simple questions and to use dictionaries but writing is often only at a simple level of copying single words or short phrases. Pupils have had more practice at speaking and listening than at reading and writing and so their skills are better developed in these areas.

- Pupils are encouraged to make links with the work they are doing in literacy and talk with confidence about grammatical concepts such as the position of adjectives and agreements.
- Pupils have recently done some work on other parts of the French-speaking world such as Mali and Haiti so they know about the different lifestyles and climate and they also know that children in these countries read the same types of books as them.
- Pupils relish the contact they have with those who speak other languages, for example they met someone who spoke Japanese and someone who spoke Spanish. These opportunities arose from links with the local specialist language college and helped pupils to develop a thirst for learning even more languages.
- Pupils have a general idea about how well they are performing and have completed some self-assessment sheets which indicate that they have very positive attitudes to learning a language, with several pupils saying they would like to do more languages work each week and another one said 'I think it is perfect the way it is'. Pupils also know that languages could be useful to them at their next school as well as for travelling abroad.

#### Quality of teaching in languages

- Teachers have improved their knowledge of French by attending locally run training sessions and have had support in class from local secondary teachers. They have good pronunciation and are able to correct pupils accurately.
- Pupils' oral skills are well developed through a range of games, songs and activities, such as using puppets, which encourage pupils to ask and answer questions. Pupils said that associating words with actions helped them to remember the meanings long after they had been taught them.
- Much of the local training has been based on the Key Stage 2 framework for languages and teachers recognise that they need to plan for further progression in reading and writing.
- Teachers are beginning to use a good range of books and other authentic resources, such as DVDs, to ensure pupils have access to a range of spoken and written language. However, in the lessons seen, pupils did not always have sufficient opportunities to practise their writing, especially the higher attaining pupils. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities were supported well as the teachers and teaching assistants worked closely together to ensure their needs were met.
- Interactive whiteboards were used well in lessons to present the language but pupils do not often get the opportunity to use ICT themselves as there have been major problems with hardware and internet access has been severely restricted.

- Assessment of pupils' performance is in the early stages of development and the school is experimenting with different methods of recording the progress that pupils have made and using this to plan the next steps.

#### Quality of the curriculum in languages

- French is taught to all pupils in Years 3 to 6. Years 5 and 6 have an hour a week in a discrete lesson, usually taught by the coordinator for languages; in Years 3 and 4 there is a discrete lesson of about 40 minutes with some reinforcement at other points in the week. Years 1 and 2 have a ten-minute, timetabled slot once a week. There are other language-based events which all pupils also enjoy greatly, such as the French breakfast when pupils order food or occasions when they use their languages during assemblies, plays and clubs.
- The curriculum has been recently re-written to take into account how much language learning pupils have already done and is being carefully planned to ensure that there is clear progression for all year groups within the mixed-age classes.
- Pupils particularly enjoy the resources, such as authentic books, and the opportunities to meet native speakers from other countries, both of which significantly enhance their understanding of other cultures.
- Links with other areas of the curriculum are becoming more explicit, especially with literacy where opportunities are taken to reinforce knowledge about how language works.

#### Effectiveness of leadership and management in languages

- Languages are an important part of the school's curriculum and there is a strong desire to make sure that the provision is of a high quality and is sustainable with languages being an important part of the school's development plan. The recent development of schemes of work has helped to ensure that progression is planned carefully.
- Staff undertake regular training locally using the local authority and language college support. Teachers have improved their language skills as well as their teaching techniques and they swap classes to ensure that pupils receive high-quality teaching linked to the strengths of the staff.
- Teachers are aware of areas that need further work, such as the development of writing, and there is a good plan to ensure that these areas will be tackled. The new assessment system will be developed so that accurate information can be given to the local secondary school about pupils' progress.

#### How well the school is implementing entitlement in Key Stage 2

- All pupils in Years 3 to 6 have discrete languages lessons and reinforcement sessions of about an hour each week.
- Teachers have had training over several years and there is a sustainable model in place to ensure that pupils get access to high-quality teaching.

The curriculum takes into account the Key Stage 2 framework for languages and helps to develop pupils' understanding of other cultures.

- The school has accurately identified the strengths and weaknesses of its provision in languages and has plans to improve areas such as developing reading and writing and recording pupils' progress.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- developing a wider range of activities to promote reading and writing
- continuing to develop strategies to assess pupils' progress so that they know what they have to do to improve
- developing links with local secondary schools so that they know what pupils have already achieved.

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

As I explained previously, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority and will be published on the Ofsted website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Jo Peach  
Additional Inspector