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Mrs V Lucas
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Lucas

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 9 February 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 learners, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of two lessons.

Achievement in languages

- Pupils' spoken skills are good; in lessons seen in Years 3 and 5, they often used full sentences and had accurate pronunciation. They understand instructions as teachers often use French to ask pupils to do things or when explaining tasks.
- Pupils' listening skills are also highly developed because they have a range of opportunities to work with adults from other countries. Pupils spoke with enthusiasm about what they had learned from talking to trainee teachers from Switzerland and Belgium. They were keen to learn about life in other countries and were fascinated to know that Swiss people often knew how to speak several languages.
- Pupils in all years are developing good skills in reading as teachers often read books with them, using the interactive whiteboard to display the text

and pictures. Pupils are very adept at using clues, such as the pictures, the context and the punctuation, to work out meaning. Pupils are also encouraged to use dictionaries but a few lower attaining pupils seen in one lesson needed more guidance on how to do this more effectively.

- Some good writing was developing in Year 6 where pupils were able to construct sentences about a character from a story, but there was less evidence of this lower down the school. Several higher attaining pupils said they would like to do more writing as it helped them to learn. Pupils used basic grammatical terms, such as noun and adjective, accurately but there were few links with other work they had done in literacy.
- Pupils are very positive about language learning. Several said that they would like to learn Spanish, German or Italian as well. They know that languages will be useful to them at secondary school or when travelling abroad. A few could name some jobs where languages might be helpful.
- A few pupils speak other languages at home and are encouraged to compare them to French. The few pupils who have little English adapt quickly to learning French with support from another teacher.

Quality of teaching in languages

- Teachers are very enthusiastic about teaching languages and have good language skills. Mostly, this is because they have high level qualifications in languages but some teachers have worked on improving their language skills at locally run training sessions. This means that pupils hear accurate French being spoken regularly in class, especially as the interactive whiteboard is used extensively by teachers to show whole books and to listen to native speakers reading out the story.
- Pupils enjoy the way that languages are taught in this school. Many of them mentioned the fact that teachers made it fun; there were lots of games and other enjoyable activities such as doing physical education in French. As one pupil said: 'I find it hard but I still really like that in a way'. Pupils also liked using information and communication technology, such as when they prepared a presentation in French on an aspect of France.
- In the lessons seen, pupils did not always have sufficient opportunities to work individually or in pairs, especially when speaking. This meant that some pupils did a lot of listening to the teacher but were unable to practise themselves. When they were given opportunities, they were given good feedback and were told how to improve their pronunciation or accuracy.
- Assessment of pupils' performance overall is informal and many pupils are unaware of what they can do to improve.

Quality of the curriculum in languages

- French is taught to all pupils in Years 3 to 6; older children have been learning a language for three years. There are occasional opportunities for pupils in the rest of the school to take part in events. These include languages, such as when pupils in the Reception class pretend to go on a

journey to another country and days when pupils bake food and run cafés using their language skills.

- French is mostly taught by the class teacher in a discrete lesson of 30 to 40 minutes each week and is supplemented by short reinforcement sessions at other points in the week.
- The curriculum is designed well to engage pupils' interest, and is based on a published resource and supplemented by teachers' own materials. Pupils particularly enjoy the authentic books and the opportunities to meet native speakers from other countries, both of which significantly enhance their understanding of other cultures.
- There is a range of extra-curricular activities which helps to bring languages alive, such as the Christmas Nativity performance in French and the mathematics café in a range of languages.
- Links with other areas of the curriculum are less well developed, especially with literacy where opportunities are missed to reinforce knowledge about how language works and to develop writing skills.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in languages

- The importance of learning a language permeates the school's ethos and is a central element of every child's experience. The vision of how languages should be taught is driven by a well-designed policy which ensures that provision is both enjoyable and sustainable.
- The quality of this provision is high and is carefully and accurately monitored, both formally through lesson observation and informally by discussion with pupils and staff and joint planning of schemes of work.
- Staff undertake very regular training both locally and nationally. They are able to improve both their language and teaching techniques and often share ideas or swap classes to ensure that pupils receive high-quality teaching.
- Work with the local secondary schools is developing through the transition group which is planning a joint teaching project.

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.
- Entitlement has been planned well and introduced over several years with appropriate training and resources.
- 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 assessment and transition.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- developing strategies to assess pupils' progress so that they know what they have to do to improve
- continuing to make links between languages and other areas of the curriculum, especially literacy, so that pupils' learning in one subject is reinforced by another
- continuing to work on developing links with secondary schools so that they are able to take into account what pupils already know.

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