

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)



5 July 2010

Mrs K Garnett  
Headteacher  
Holbeton School  
The Square  
Holbeton  
Plymouth  
PL8 1LT

Dear Mrs Garnett

Ofsted 2010–11 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 24 June 2010 to look at work in 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 without their consent.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included: interviews with staff, members of the local community and pupils; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work; and observation of one lesson.

### Achievement in languages

- Pupils are very positive about learning languages and see them as an important part of their education. They all respond well to ML in their school life: from the pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage who answer the register in French to the older pupils in Key Stage 2 who spent a week learning Spanish as part of their international week project.
- They listen well to new language and their pronunciation is good. They are confident performers.
- Their recall of language previously learnt is good, but even older pupils in Key Stage 2 are only operating at word or short-phrase level.
- They copy accurately but, as with their oral work, they are copying words in a limited range of topics.
- Pupils' intercultural understanding is strong. They show a real appreciation of, and value, cultural difference. Their response to bilingual pupils is

positive and interested, as is the attitude to how pupils in other countries are educated.

### Quality of teaching in languages

- Teachers' knowledge of the target language is not extensive but they present a clear oral model to their pupils. They make good use of authentic materials to support language presentation.
- Good use is made of external expert speakers to provide specialist input in additional languages.
- Although teachers' explanations are clear, they use English rather than modelling in French. This limits opportunities for pupils to listen to the target language.
- Pupils have been involved in assessment by carrying out self-assessment activities. These give a good idea of the general skills pupils are developing but do not define exactly what language pupils have learned.

### Quality of the curriculum in languages

- The school is at a crossroads with regards to curriculum review and planning. It has made use of a published scheme of work to support the teaching of French, which has been the main language taught. Teachers have found it difficult to ensure the scheme meets the needs of their mixed-age classes, the school's curriculum organisation and timing of the provision for French. As a result, there has been a need to revise and reinforce rather than move on to new material which has limited progression over time.
- The school's focus on the international dimension, particularly during the international week, has led to an enriching experience for pupils. Pupils in Year 2 have done a project in mathematics through the medium of Mandarin Chinese and pupils in Years 5 and 6 have learned Spanish from a teacher from South America.
- The school's link with the village's twin town in France has promoted real interest in learning about the country.

### Effectiveness of leadership and management in languages

- You show strong support for primary modern languages but it is clear that the review of provision must be carefully considered. Planning indicates that, although the renewed approach to how ML entitlement is to be delivered is not yet finalised, senior leaders are very clear about how the subject should contribute to their pupils' development.
- The school has made very good use of links with the local community, including with past pupils to develop intercultural understanding.
- Although links with local specialist language colleges have been exploited well for advice and staffing support, the school has not yet explored or exploited the range of training opportunities and networking groups that are available. The school has, however, audited the language skills of staff

and has an accurate picture of where to target continuing professional development.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- deciding on the form that the revised ML entitlement will take and plan for provision in the short, medium and longer term
- ensuring that all staff, who are to be involved, have access to appropriate training to support them in the teaching of ML.

I hope that 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 under the URN for your school. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Anne Looney  
Her Majesty's Inspector