

## **OFSTED findings – outstanding primary schools 2019-2020**

“This inspection was conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and in accordance with Ofsted’s published procedures for a no formal designation inspection of schools. The inspection was carried out to enable Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector to better understand the quality of education in specific subjects provided by outstanding primary schools.”

Comment extracts from the OFSTED reports of the 24 outstanding primary schools inspected in 2019/20 in the process explained above. The comments are arranged under headings for ease of access. The groupings were chosen by the frequency of comments in this area.

### **Positive comments**

#### **Curriculum planning**

- Lessons are very structured and pupils have frequent chances to revise previous learning before moving on.
- The curriculum is designed so that pupils have sequences of lessons on each topic that they cover in depth.
- They are able to do more and remember more because they are already familiar with certain content, such as adjectives.
- The curriculum is taught through different topics which are completed in a logical order. These topics focus on key vocabulary. Pupils revisit and extend their vocabulary as they progress through the school.
- The French curriculum is ambitious and, in many ways, it exceeds the subject content of the national curriculum. Leaders regularly review the curriculum so that it is coherently planned and sequenced.
- The curriculum for Modern Hebrew is ambitious. It exceeds the subject content of the national curriculum for languages. There is a clear focus on developing pupils’ communication skills. In addition, teachers understand the need for pupils to grasp phonics, grammar and vocabulary, the building blocks of language learning.
- Curriculum planning is well sequenced and logical. Teachers are supported by a knowledgeable curriculum leader. Teachers deliver lessons with precision and confidence. Pupils work hard. Your teachers have created an environment where pupils are excited about language learning.
- Curriculum planning is very clear. It sequences what pupils are expected to learn in French very well. For example, the vocabulary that pupils learn has been well chosen. Words are introduced gradually, and they are revisited regularly across key stage 2. This helps pupils to remember them.
- Their understanding of the building blocks of the language is strong.
- Lessons are sequenced logically to build on what has been learned before.
- Leaders carefully select which vocabulary and grammar are taught. They want to develop pupils’ understanding of sentence structure and how the language works. This underpins much of the curriculum. Pupils learn single words, then use these in increasingly complex sentences, applying grammar correctly
- The specialist teacher does not move on through the curriculum until the basic concepts are understood. What is more, pupils are delightful, hardworking and want to do their best. As a result of your ambitious curriculum, which is implemented effectively, pupils achieve well in the subject.

- Leaders have developed their own scheme of work based on the national curriculum programme of study. There is a focus on key vocabulary and the grammar required, which builds up progressively during each year group.
- Current curriculum plans in Spanish are logical and planned well. They support teachers effectively in knowing what content to deliver and in what order. Leaders have designed curriculum plans so that teachers introduce the differences between English and Spanish sounds systematically. Plans prescribe the vocabulary that pupils are to be taught. Leaders have designed the curriculum so that teachers introduce simple grammatical concepts gradually.
- Curriculum plans are well sequenced and logical. They help class teachers to know what Spanish to teach pupils and in what order. This is particularly the case for vocabulary and grammar.
- Curriculum plans are ambitious. They match the ambition of the national curriculum in several aspects. Specifically, simple grammar and the development of more complex sentence structures are well planned.
- Due consideration has been given to the order in which topics, vocabulary and grammar are taught. There is logical progression in Mandarin for speakers of English.
- There has been a consistent approach to teaching French for many years. Pupils build upon their knowledge term by term and year by year.
- The standards that pupils reach when they leave school are impressive. This is because pupils progress through a very well-designed and implemented curriculum during their time at school. This curriculum focuses on the development of phonological and grammatical awareness in addition to a broadening of vocabulary.
- The Latin curriculum is ambitious and exceeds the requirements of the national curriculum for languages at key stage 2.

## **Inclusion**

- All pupils study French between Year 3 and Year 6 now. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those that are disadvantaged.
- It ensures that all pupils in key stage two participate in French lessons regularly. This includes those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and pupils for whom English is an additional language. Where necessary, the curriculum is adapted to provide greater access to work.
- Modern foreign languages (MFL) is an important part of the school's curriculum. All pupils have a weekly one-hour French lesson with a specialist teacher. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) at the school's two specialist resource provisions
- French has been a priority for the school for many years. All pupils receive weekly French lessons between Years 3 and 6. This includes pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).
- All pupils in key stage 2 study French for an hour a week. This includes pupils for whom English is an additional language and those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).
- The school has a high number of French native speakers. Leaders ensure that these pupils are suitably stretched according to their level and needs. Most native speakers work with a French tutor before or after school. Working with the tutor, leaders personalise pupils' class learning to tie in with the extra-curricular tutoring.

- Teaching assistants are present when the specialist teacher delivers lessons. They then help individuals to catch up if they are struggling. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) if they need support.

## Leadership

- Some areas of leadership are strong in French. The 'subject leader handbook' is comprehensive and helpful. You ask pupils what they think of languages and make sure that this information forms part of your development plans. You check the quality of the curriculum. This includes looking at pupils' work and visiting lessons.
- Leaders set aside sufficient time to cover the curriculum and ensure that all pupils have equal access to language lessons. The specialist teacher has expertise in languages and delivers the curriculum as set out in detailed plans. Leaders monitor the quality of language provision through lesson observations and book looks. From this they know the key strengths and areas for improvement
- You are now turning your attention to languages as part of your programme of school improvement.
- Senior leaders place a high priority on the learning of French in school.
- Senior leaders monitor the work of the external subject teacher closely. The link governor for MFL is a well-qualified language specialist. Although new to the role, she is already actively engaged in evaluating the effectiveness of the provision and reporting to senior leaders and other governors. Consequently, leaders and governors are aware of the strengths and areas for development in the subject.
- Leaders have high expectations that all class teachers in key stage 2 teach French, supported by an enthusiastic leadership team, including an MFL coordinator
- Your subject leader and specialist teacher have good subject knowledge. They apply this successfully to classes of primary-aged pupils. You and your team ensure that the quality of the curriculum is monitored, and changes made when necessary. For example, you noted that there are gaps in pupils' French phonic knowledge. You have made tweaks to the curriculum to address this.

## Phonics

- Staff model correct pronunciation and explain sound-spelling links. Pupils' pronunciation is generally very accurate as a result.
- Phonics is integrated as part of teaching French reading. Pupils start by hearing 3 sounds, then sounding them out to build up words and then writing them.
- Differences between English and French spelling are highlighted and practised. The vocabulary that has been chosen contains many different French sounds. This is not by chance. It has been planned strategically. Again, this is an example of the highly logical approach to curriculum planning. Pupils' pronunciation is strong as a result. They can explain differences between how French and English words are written. They even correct each other if they ever make a slip in their pronunciation. Teachers deliver the curriculum effectively.
- Pupils are taught to make links between how words are written in French and how they sound. Staff model and reinforce correct pronunciation. Pupils can pronounce familiar words fairly accurately.
- Pupils learn common sounds and apply an action to them. This helps them to remember the sounds. They could pronounce unknown words correctly using the rules they have learned.
- New subject plans in languages correctly place greater emphasis on the teaching of skills such as phonics and grammar as well as vocabulary. They include the teaching of the sounds

letters represent, which is a vital skill that was previously missing from the teaching of French.

- Staff ensure that pupils learn how to pronounce French words correctly. Pupils in a Year 4 lesson, for example, could spot patterns between the sounds of words and how they were spelt.
- Pupils are taught to understand the links between how Spanish words are written and how they are pronounced. This is done systematically. The teacher then reminds pupils of these links when meeting new pieces of vocabulary. Pupils have a strong understanding of how to pronounce Spanish words.

## **Language skills**

- Writing is particularly strong. Pupils progress beyond writing individual words to sentences and paragraphs. They can link sentences and express opinions. However, pupils do not have enough opportunities to present their spoken French to a range of audiences.
- Curriculum planning is closely aligned with the National Curriculum programme of study in key stage 2. This includes the ability to 'write phrases from memory and adapt these to create new sentences, to express ideas clearly'. The school's curriculum planning also states that in writing, pupils will progress from words and familiar phrases in Year 3 to writing a short paragraph in Year 6.
- Pupils can use bilingual dictionaries to look up new words.
- She weaves together exposure to vocabulary with phonological and grammatical awareness. She does this very well
- Curriculum plans ensure that speaking, listening, reading and writing are used to practise and develop language. Pupils' writing is well developed. For example, pupils progress beyond writing individual words to sentences and paragraphs. They can link sentences and express opinions. They build on their prior knowledge so that each piece of writing at the end of a unit becomes slightly more complex by way of structure while broadening pupils' vocabulary.
- Grammar is the main focus of the curriculum, and pupils learn sophisticated grammatical structures, applying these to English and Latin.
- Vocabulary is carefully chosen so that pupils build up a bank of words which they can use to decode new words. They also learn high-frequency words and make frequent use of their 'pictionary' sheets which break down vocabulary into manageable chunks. Pupils like using previous knowledge to decode new words in Latin and English.
- Over their time at school, pupils are exposed to more complex reading texts in Spanish. The Spanish that they produce also increases in complexity. They begin to write longer sentences by adding connectives, for example. Pupils' bank of vocabulary increases. They can alter simple sentences to express themselves. As a result, pupils' achievement is relatively strong in Spanish by the time that they leave school.
- She uses a variety of resources, tasks and strategies to implement the curriculum. For example, she understands the step-by-step approach needed when introducing new vocabulary.

## **Assessment and recording learning**

- The whole-school system of 'learning ladders' helps teachers to assess how well pupils are doing. Teachers then alter the curriculum for different classes if this is needed.
- Assessment, including in French, is linked to expectations of the national curriculum programme of study for key stage 2. Leaders have developed a skills progression ladder, 'building blocks', for each year group.

- They were able to explain the 'building blocks' assessment system, which informs them of how well they are doing.
- Mandarin teachers use assessment well to ensure that pupils are making progress through the curriculum. Teachers use this information to shape their plans to make sure that anyone who is falling behind is able to catch up. They change their delivery if the class as a whole does not grasp a concept.
- Your specialist teacher uses assessment effectively to know where pupils need support or where the curriculum needs to be further tweaked to ensure that pupils achieve well.
- You are fully aware of the few areas where languages can be improved. For example, you had already identified the need to further develop assessment so that it pinpoints even more accurately the next steps for pupils.
- Your specialist teacher uses assessment effectively to check how well pupils have learned vocabulary and how well they understand simple texts in Spanish.

### **Delivery and CPD**

- MFL is prominent on the timetable so that it is taught every week in key stage 2.
- Class teachers stay in lessons to observe the specialist teaching French.
- Occasionally, pupils miss parts of lessons for afternoon intervention sessions but leaders try to avoid this as much as possible. Each class has lessons delivered by their class teacher for one term and by the curriculum leader for two terms
- Plans for professional development in Spanish are in place.
- Staff training is planned to ensure that all staff have secure subject knowledge
- Teachers benefit from training to equip them to practise French during the week.
- You liaise with the local secondary school to seek advice and support to ensure that all staff will be trained and have the subject-specific knowledge they need
- A French-speaking member of staff now teaches most key stage 2 classes. This means that there is now a consistent approach to teaching French. Class teachers support the specialist teacher in lessons and aim to develop their skills at the same time.
- You and your senior team are committed to languages. You have all completed beginners courses in Spanish to help you to understand the specific nature of the subject. This has helped you to quality assure the curriculum and its delivery. You already have links with the languages department in a local secondary school to support you in further improving how well Spanish is delivered at your school.
- Currently, your specialist teacher teaches French for four half terms per year per class. Class teachers are responsible for teaching French for the other two half terms. They receive coaching and resources to support them from the specialist teacher. Class teachers make sure that French is revisited across the course of the week to help to embed French vocabulary and structures in pupils' memories.
- Your teachers capitalise on making links through the curriculum. They weave the study of languages through the working week. For example, teachers make sensible links between French and English sentence structures in lessons. Teachers also ensure that, where possible, links are made to other areas of the curriculum to support language learning and to contextualise languages within the curriculum.

### **Cultural links and Profile of Languages**

- You know that studying languages is important. In diversity week, different home languages were celebrated, including Polish, Russian and Romany. An international link with South Africa is well under way, with Zulu and Afrikaans as languages to explore.

- Displays around the school show the high profile of languages. These are often linked to pupils' current learning and reinforce key vocabulary.
- Pupils are encouraged to carry out their own research to develop a wider cultural understanding of France.
- The curriculum includes many opportunities for pupils to learn about French culture and about other languages.
- Developing cultural awareness, celebrating difference and exploring the international dimension of education, runs like a rod of iron through the curriculum at your school. European and international projects are central to much of your work.
- You use displays and assemblies to highlight the importance of learning a language. Pupils are interested in languages and many perform short plays in Spanish at special events.

## **Comments on areas for improvement**

### **Curriculum planning**

- However, curriculum planning does not emphasise grammar or the sound-spelling link enough. This has been the case for a few years. Pupils can recall some pieces of vocabulary. They can also participate in simple rehearsed question-and-answer exchanges. However, their pronunciation is often weak. In addition, they are not able to produce simple sentences independently with confidence or accuracy.
- Most topics, though, are selected to widen pupils' vocabulary and are not taught in any particular order. This means that pupils do not always build on what they have learned before.
- Curriculum plans are based on a scheme of work that requires more than 30 minutes per week to deliver. The subject leader is altering these schemes and omitting some elements. However, in doing so, no consideration has been given to ensuring that the order in which sounds, grammar or sentence structures are introduced remains intact.
- However, the languages curriculum as a whole currently does not match the aims or scope of the national curriculum by the end of Year 6.

### **Inclusion**

- A very small number of pupils with SEND do not have French lessons. Leaders have decided that these pupils benefit more from time spent in other activities, such as social and behaviour support. This means that these pupils do not have an equal opportunity to access language learning at this point in time.
- All pupils do not have equal access to the MFL curriculum. A number of key stage 2 pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) have missed all or part of their French lessons this term to attend intervention sessions. For other pupils with SEND, work is not adapted sufficiently to meet their needs, and they struggle with tasks. The school also has a number of pupils who speak French or have some experience of the language. They do the same work as everyone else and often get bored, although their written work is often weak.
- Native French speakers are encouraged to extend their writing, to include adjectives for example, but expectations of these pupils are not high enough.

## **Leadership**

- Subject leaders and teachers do not have a consistently strong understanding of how to build pupils' knowledge in French step by step.

## **Phonics**

- They do not learn the phonics of the language. Songs and rhymes help pupils to understand the sounds and patterns of the language but pupils' pronunciation is inconsistent.
- Planning is less precise around the differences between English and Spanish spelling. As a result, pupils do not always know how words should be pronounced.
- Their pronunciation is weak. This is because this has not been taught systematically in the past. Sometimes, they are exposed to inaccurate pronunciation and incorrect written French.

## **Language skills**

- However, pupils have very limited opportunities to develop their written French. This is not a regular part of their learning. In this respect, the curriculum does not match the requirements of the national curriculum. Leaders have plans to address this.
- The most pupils can do is recall random vocabulary and participate in a limited number of rehearsed question and answer exchanges
- However, because of the somewhat sporadic language learning, pupils do not have enough opportunities to practise and consolidate new vocabulary. As a result, it is not embedded in their memory.
- Pupils say that they did not enjoy their French lessons because they did not challenge them enough. For example, in the past pupils were taught large numbers of words without the basic skills of what to do with these words in a sentence

## **Grammar and sentence building**

- Pupils can form simple sentences in French but they struggle to do this without support. This is because the curriculum does not have a sufficient focus on the basic components of French grammar.
- Pupils understand some basic grammar, such as genders and plurals. Verbs are introduced from Year 3 and pupils use familiar verbs in the first and third persons. In Year 6, they learn to conjugate regular '-er' verbs. However, pupils struggle to remember and use high-frequency verbs as they have not been embedded in their memories. Often, these verbs are taught as pieces of vocabulary rather than the building blocks of the language.
- They do not use increasingly complex sentences or produce simple sentences independently.
- The curriculum does not have enough emphasis on grammar. Pupils understand some concepts, such as genders and adjectival agreement. They do not know the basic components of a sentence in French, such as personal pronouns and key verbs. This means that pupils struggle to create or manipulate a sentence independently.
- Some grammar is driven by the topic that is being covered, rather than a sequential programme to develop pupils' knowledge of the structure of the language.
- With support, they can write simple paragraphs. This is done as a 'cut and paste' activity. However, pupils have little understanding of Spanish sentence structure. Pupils do not keep up with the ambition of the curriculum.
- The disjointed approach to teaching basic grammar does not support pupils' understanding of how each language works.

- Pupils know some simple vocabulary. They can respond to a few simple questions and answer exchanges. However, pupils are not able to produce simple sentences independently with confidence or accuracy.
- Pupils struggle to apply grammar rules, particularly in their written French. They do not have many opportunities to create new sentences by themselves beyond structured writing templates.
- Pupils cannot build simple sentences. They simply rehearse question and answer exchanges and practise vocabulary. As a result, achievement in languages across the school is varied. Pupils produce
- Many pupils have not progressed beyond learning individual words and have very limited grammatical knowledge. The previous curriculum lacked structure and did not match the national curriculum subject content. Pupils are not yet able to build or use simple sentences in French, for example.
- There is a lack of precision in curriculum planning as far as grammar is concerned. Too little attention is given to ensuring that all pupils fully understand the basic building blocks of the language. Grammatical concepts are covered incidentally and are driven by the topic being studied. Pupils do understand some aspects of Spanish grammar
- I have noted, however, that there is a lack of precision in curriculum planning as far as grammar is concerned. Too little attention is given to ensuring that all pupils fully understand the basic building blocks of the language. By the end of Year 6, pupils can write in short paragraphs with support. However, their ability to produce simple French sentences independently is more limited.

### **Assessment and recording learning**

- Many pupils do not have their own books or notes. A 'class book' is used to record what has been covered in class. This does not help teachers to know where individual pupils are in their language learning.
- Leaders' consideration of how assessment can be used to track pupils' progress in French over time is at an early stage of development. Currently, the French teacher retains much of the information on pupils' achievement and does not record this for leaders to track. Pupils spoken to could not say how they were doing in French, other than from their end of term comments, which 'sometimes refer to French'. Leaders acknowledged that the comments in reports and the judgements on attainment are not based on any assessment evidence.
- Pupils do not have their own books or vocabulary records, except in Year 6. This is making it hard for pupils to know what they are supposed to remember.
- No meaningful assessment takes place in French. This does not help teachers to refine their plans or support individuals.

### **Delivery and CPD**

- Teachers do not receive enough support to help them to deliver the French curriculum. There are gaps in teachers' knowledge of grammar and the French sound-spelling link.
- Lessons have not been regular. You accept that professional development in this subject has been limited. The impact of this is clear.
- Teaching of French in Years 5 and 6 alternates every half-term. Leaders have not yet considered the impact of alternating French teaching between Year 5 and Year 6 every half-term.
- Pupils in Years 5 and 6 learn more or less the same aspects in German as they did in French when in Years 3 and 4. They do not study one language across the whole of key stage 2,



which limits pupils' progression and does not allow pupils to access the full programme of study for MFL

- Pupils do not have regular, timetabled language lessons. Teachers aim to deliver a one hour lesson each week, but this does not always happen.
- Sometimes languages are taught in half-termly blocks, so pupils have long gaps between their lessons.
- Leaders do not ensure consistently enough that language errors in teaching and in the resources used are identified and corrected. Where necessary, teachers should have the opportunity, through further training, for subject enhancement.
- Although curriculum plans are well sequenced, teachers do not follow these plans closely enough.
- Senior leaders took the decision to stop teaching Spanish or any other foreign language in the summer term of 2018. They introduced Makaton, a sign communication system, which is not a recognised language. This means that since June 2018, leaders have not offered a broad range of subjects in key stage 2 with at least the same breadth, depth and ambition as the national curriculum. Pupils in all year groups do not have an opportunity to study a foreign language.
- They have little or no training in either the French language or French teaching.

### **Cultural links and Profile of Languages**

- Links between French and other subjects are underdeveloped. The school's MFL policy states that pupils will research other French-speaking countries and learn about French customs and traditions in other subjects. Pupils spoken to could not say where French is spoken in the wider world beyond France.

Overview of findings on blog here: [Languages in outstanding primary schools - Ofsted blog: schools, early years, further education and skills](#)

Compiled by Sue cave

May 2021