

Ofsted Deep Dive into Primary MFL

Ellie Chettle-Cully reviews her experience : *‘Compared to inspections under the previous framework, this Deep Dive inspection felt to me more like a profession dialogue than a scrutiny.’*

This overview presents the experience of a Deep Dive into MFL from the perspective of a specialist teacher in a two-form entry, inner-city primary school. It will cover the structure of the inspection, from initial call to the subject Deep Dive, as well as questions asked. This Deep Dive experience is individual to the setting in which it happened and may not reflect what has happened, or will happen, in other schools. Its aim is to enable other subject leads to consider one possible Deep Dive format and to prepare for the types of questions that may be asked.

Initial Call and pre-inspection preparation:

After the initial call with the school's Head Teacher, all subject leads were informed of the timetable that the inspectors would be following over the coming two days. I was told that the inspector leading on MFL would want to meet with me first thing in the morning of the first day to discuss the way that MFL is taught within the school, followed by just one lesson observation and then work scrutiny. Since five subject areas were included on the list for Deep Dive, there would not be time for multiple lesson observations. This meant there would be a greater emphasis on work scrutiny across all year groups, not just the lesson being taught.

In terms of preparation, I made sure all books were up to date (including all pupil corrections); printed a copy of all Long Term and Short Term Plans for the inspector to have to hand, including my detailed Long Term Plans by Year Group, which demonstrate progression (and chances to revisit learning) over time; made sure my tracking grids were available (although I was never asked to show these); and went through my pre-prepared list of possible Ofsted questions. I made sure that all books from all year groups (except the observed lesson) were ready in the room that we would be meeting in so he could choose books easily and ensured that I had labelled up Pupil Premium and SEND books so he knew which were which (and so I didn't forget anybody in my slightly stressed state).

Deep Dive Discussion:

I met with the inspector first thing in the morning. He asked a range of questions to get a sense of how MFL was taught across the school. The whole discussion definitely had the feel more of a chat than an interview and the conversation flowed quite naturally from one area to the next. Initially, he was very keen to understand our intent - what we wanted the children to be able to do by the time they left us in Year 6. He looked carefully at the Long Term Plans and how progression was built in and we spent a lot of time discussing how we ensure that pupils remember knowledge over time. The questions below aren't word-for-word, but demonstrate the areas covered. I've put in the main points of my responses, for reference.

1. What do you want children to be able to do in French at the school? *I confirmed that he meant what we wanted them to be able to do by the time they left the school.*

- Feel confident to speak, listen, read and write in French, setting them up for success in further language-learning at secondary school.
- Have a good grasp of key, age-appropriate grammatical concepts as well as a good grounding in phonics and a bank of key vocabulary, which is revisited regularly to ensure retention.
- Have a range of skills as language-learners, not necessarily link to French specifically as some will study a different language at secondary school, such as a knowledge of how to use cognates to understand unknown vocabulary and how to use a bilingual dictionary.
- Have a good understanding of French culture, and also, importantly, a sense of French as a global language and an appreciation of the diversity of the French-speaking world. We do this through partnerships with link schools in many different countries, including Guadeloupe, Reunion Island, Rwanda, Chad and Senegal, as well as mainland France.
- Develop a love of language-learning, which sets them firmly on a path to further study.

2. How do you plan for progression across all four years of KS2? *I showed him my detailed LTPs and talked him through them.*

- Showed the Cave Languages progression grids and discussed how this breaks down the targets of the Programme of Study (which only show us what children should be able to do by the end of KS2) into smaller steps to show progression. Explained that this is the basis for the way that units are planned and sequenced, allowing children to build systematically on their learning and demonstrate sustained progression.
- Units are planned and sequenced to ensure that pupils revisit and build on new vocabulary and grammatical concepts throughout their four years.
- Used an example of Year 3 learning number to 12 in order to be able to say their age, whilst Year 4 learn numbers to 31 in order to be able to talk about their birthdays (as this is what he would be watching in the observed lesson).
- Talked through the types of sentence structures I would expect each year group to be able to achieve, giving an example of the use of adjectives.
 - Y3: simple sentences with an adjective describing a masculine noun.
 - Y4: simple sentences with an adjective in agreement with the masculine or feminine noun.
 - Y5: starting to introduce sentences with adjectives which don't follow the general rule (e.g. grand/petit) and agreement in the plural.
 - Y6: using a range of adjectives both before and after the noun and in the plural in complex sentences.
- Showed him my plans, with new vocabulary and grammar concepts in red and revisited learning in blue, so he could see that certain concepts were coming around again and again.
- Discussed how phonics is embedded right from the start of Year 3 and how by the end of Year 4, children have been exposed to all the possible phonemes of the language, which allows them to begin to decode unfamiliar words with greater accuracy.

3. Talk me through a unit of work and tell me why you are teaching it at that point in the year. *Used birthdays as an example as that was what he would be observing in Year 4.*

- This unit of work builds on learning from Year 3, where pupils have already learned numbers to 12.
- They are now continuing on to 31, to build their knowledge of the number system and enable them to talk about dates and, in the case of this unit, birthdays.
- Months of the year are also introduced, building on knowledge of phonemes and graphemes and giving children useful key vocabulary that can be used again in different contexts (for example later in Year 4 to talk about the weather at different points of the year and in Year 5 when talking about when they will be going on holiday to a specific location).

4. Can these units be adapted year on year? *I assumed that this was a reference to Covid and whether we were adapting planning to help children through catch-up.*

- Made it very clear that the units of work planned are the vehicles for the language, grammatical concepts and phonics. These have to be adapted year on year to support different cohorts.
- This is especially true at the moment because there are gaps in children's knowledge post-Covid. Gave the example of Year 4 who missed work on days of the week due to Covid and will be doing those as part of their weather unit later in the term. This would not have been the case originally, but the planning has been adapted.

5. Did you continue to teach French during the pandemic?

- Yes. Children had weekly live lessons and those who couldn't access those because of lack of access to technology at the required times had video recorded lessons.
- Pupils submitted work via Google Classroom.

6. How do you make sure pupils can revisit their learning?

- He pointed out that I'd already covered most of this during our discussion on the sequencing of units but wondered if there was anything else to add.
- I added that pupils revisit previous units through starter activities.

- Teacher revisit learning with their class using pre-prepared slides and videos and each class has a song of the half term which is played every day in class.
- French is used during school assemblies, for example of sing the 'Joyeux Anniversaire' song on Wednesdays when birthday cards are presented.

7. How do you assess whether pupils have retained what you have taught them?

- Assessment for learning throughout lessons. Showed examples of how I jot down observations on post-it notes to stick into books with pictures for speaking and listening tasks, so that there is evidence.
- Summative end-of-unit assessments at the end of each half term, which show (without any prompts for support) what children can recall in terms of speaking, listening, reading and writing.
- Explained that this was tracked used grids but he didn't want to see them. Just took my word for it.

8. How to you support SEND pupils with their learning?

- Discussed how starting a new language in KS2 (in our school's case) is a great leveller and how SEND pupils often find this a big confidence boost.
- Mentioned that much of what we do in language lessons naturally supports the language-learning of SEND pupils:
 - Images to support learning of new vocabulary.
 - Physical French Phonics used (attaches an image and action to a sound) which helps it to stick.
 - Songs and rhymes used often.
- Discussed the school's "no ceilings" approach to task-setting for SEND learners i.e. I don't give them a specific "easy" task. Showed examples of colour-coded speaking and writing scaffolds which I make for the children (he seemed to be keen on them), which allow children to create a sentence of the level of complexity that they feel comfortable with.
- Discussed the use of glossaries instead of full bilingual dictionaries for some SEND pupils when working on looking up new or unknown vocabulary.
- Children all have Knowledge Organisers in their books, which contain all the key vocabulary for a unit and can be referred to, if needed.
- Mentioned colour-coding words (e.g red for feminine nouns and blue for masculine ones).
- Pre-teaching of new vocabulary.
- Pre-asking of questions (i.e., getting them prepared for a question prior to asking it in a whole-class session).

9. And how to you push the more able?

- Discussed encouraging children to challenge themselves by not using visual aids or prompts (e.g. Knowledge Organisers, displays, the board).
- Repeated speaking and writing frame idea about colour-coding so pupils can extend their writing, or example by using conjunctions.
- More able modelling or leading elements of learning.
- Showed some examples of "no ceilings" listening tasks in books e.g. children can do a simple *vrai ou faux* ticking activity when listening to a text, or could do that **and** add in the corrections.

10. How are you looking to develop MFL in the school in the future?

- Talked about how MFL has traditionally been a subject taught by a specialist in the school and many teachers do not have the confidence and subject knowledge to do this themselves.
- Explained that I wanted to upskill teachers so that if I wasn't I for some reason, they could have a good go at teaching a lesson.
- Referred again to the videos and resources I create for class teachers so that they can revisit learning during the week with their classes, upskilling themselves in the process.
- Discussed potential for future whole-school CPD in the teaching of MFL.

11. Is there anything else that we haven't covered that you'd like to speak about?

- Mentioned extra-curricular clubs.
- Cross-curricular events and links e.g. Francophone Art Week; La Semaine de la Francophonie; Bastille Day and Epiphany celebrations.
- Discussed restarting of school trip to France in 2022 – he wanted to know exactly what they did, which year groups went and how this was helpful to their French learning.

Initial Book Scrutiny:

- He wanted to see examples of books from each year group. Since there was only a half-term's worth of work, we look at the units of the four year groups.
- He was particularly interested to see book examples from Pupil Premium and SEND pupils.
- I made sure in advance point out that in languages we assess children in speaking, listening, read and writing and so children **do not write in their books every lesson** and there is no need to do writing for writing's sake. I also explained that pupils do lots of work on whiteboards so they can amend errors and make changes easily, building confidence.
- I talked him through the lessons recorded in the books and how they were sequenced, what the children had done, the rationale behind them doing different activities.
- I made sure to show exactly how there was progression between each year group e.g. Year 3 working on simple, single sentence introductions (*je m'appelle; j'habite à...*), whilst Year 6 are working towards an extended piece of writing talking about their identity (name, age, birthday, where they live, likes and dislikes, nationality and languages spoken and appearance in terms of skin, hair and eye colours).
- Where speaking activities were the main focus of the lesson, I showed him again how I use pictures and post-its to gather evidence of activities covered and learning observed.

Lesson Observation:

- Children revisited numbers to 31 for the starter and were working on saying and spelling the months of the year in French, using their knowledge of phonics. They then moved on to putting this into a sentence, starting with either *c'est le* or *mon anniversaire est le...* and played a couple of games of Trapdoor to practise.
- SEND pupils were supported with grapheme mats to allow them to access the spelling activities and continued to segment and blend to create the month names.
- Rapid-graspers were encouraged to say the months aloud, without segmenting and blending if possible, and to spell without the use of a grapheme mat or Knowledge Organiser. They were also encouraged to use the longer sentence-starter.
- The inspector did come around a few times to briefly chat to children and discuss their learning.

Work scrutiny with pupils:

- I was asked to choose 6 pupils from the observed class to bring to the discussion.
- Based on his previous focus, I made sure that Pupil Premium and SEND were represented in the group, and let him know this afterwards.
- He asked the children a range of questions but it definitely didn't feel like he was trying to catch them out. If their answers weren't very detailed he gave some positive prompts which put them on the right track so he could get the evidence he wanted.
- Example questions:
 - **What were you learning during your French lesson?**
 - **Can you tell me something that you learned in the lesson?** Then prompted them by saying, can you say June in French? Can you say...in French?
 - **How do you know you are doing well in French?**
 - **Does your Knowledge Organiser help you when you're learning?**
 - **Do you enjoy your French learning?**
 - **What things do you like doing in French?**
 - **What kinds of things did you learn last year?** He did acknowledge to the children that there had been a lockdown and that made it harder to remember things.
 - **Would you like to carry on learning French when you leave this school?**
 - **Would you feel confident to speak to a French person, if you went to France?**
- He allowed the children to initiate some of the conversation themselves and then followed up with questions to clarify. In this way, they spoke to him about writing postcards to their partner school on Reunion Island; how they learn about other languages in assembly and on European Day of Languages; and about extra-curricular Spanish Club.

Overall feel of the Deep Dive:

Compared to inspections under the previous framework, this Deep Dive inspection felt to me more like a professional dialogue than a scrutiny. Of course, the inspector asked questions to try and get a detailed picture of languages provision in the school, and he was very clear that he wanted to see evidence of all children making progress, but the overall feel was one of CPD, rather than monitoring. There was no expectation of have everything to hand or to have everything perfect. It was about plans for development and improvement, as well as what was already going on. The inspector was also clear to mention that if I felt I'd missed anything, then I should find him and tell him so that it could be added to the portfolio of evidence.