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Mr I Devereux-Roberts  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Devereux-Roberts

**Ofsted 2010–11 subject survey inspection programme: religious education (RE)**

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and pupils, during my visit on 11 November 2010 to look at work in RE.

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 and pupils; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work; and observation of two lessons and an assembly.

The overall effectiveness of RE is good with outstanding features.

**Achievement in RE**

Achievement in RE is good with outstanding features.

- The attainment of the pupils in Year 2 is broadly in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus, representing good but slightly uneven progress across Key Stage 1. The pupils are confident about expressing their thoughts and ideas about important elements of their personal experience. They could, for example, talk sensitively about the significance of their own special book. They can also identify relevant and pertinent questions to ask when investigating religious material; for example when pupils decided that they wanted to find out if the bible is fiction or non-fiction. Where their progress is less secure is in the use of an appropriate range of subject vocabulary when talking about religions.

- Pupils in Year 6 are attaining above the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. This reflects good and, in some respects, outstanding progress across Key Stage 2. They can engage in lively and informed discussion about a range of religious issues such as the existence of God. They can also debate matters related to the place of religion in the modern world such as the wearing of Muslim dress. They have a wide range of knowledge of religions. A particular strength is their ability to use a variety of higher level skills when investigating religion. In one impressive Year 4 lesson on Passover, pupils were able to speculate about the meaning of the symbolism of the meal, drawing on their prior learning to make connections between the Exodus story, features of Jewish belief, the form of the celebration and the wider concepts of slavery and freedom. Although the subject contributes strongly to the development of the skills of discussion and enquiry, the opportunities for older pupils to use more independent extended writing in RE are relatively limited.
- Attitudes towards RE are very positive. Pupils recognise its importance in terms of understanding the diversity of religion in the world but also appreciate the opportunities that it gives them to reflect on their own ideas and beliefs. RE also makes an excellent contribution to the pupils' wider personal development. There is a strong focus on developing their ability to be reflective and very good opportunities to explore cultural diversity linked, for example, with the school's connections with Ghana.

### **Quality of teaching of RE**

The quality of teaching of RE is good with outstanding features.

- RE is taught by one specialist throughout the school. This has been the key to securing the high quality of the provision. Teaching is characterised by excellent use of subject knowledge, very detailed planning and a strong focus on ensuring that learning is challenging. In particular, great care is taken to structure work so that the two key areas of attainment in RE, learning 'about' and 'from' religion, are blended skilfully together.
- A wide range of stimulating and demanding activities and resources is used to prompt interest and drive up the level of challenge. During the inspection pupils were engaged, for example, in helping to determine the questions to set up enquiries, re-enacting and interpreting a Seder meal, and using moments of structured reflection to consider the deeper significance of their learning.
- Good use is made of in-class support and differentiated resources to ensure that the range of pupils' needs is met appropriately. Just occasionally, when the pace of learning drops, some pupils lose concentration and, as a result, the rate of progress is more limited.
- The arrangements for assessing pupils' progress are good. Pupils are given regular opportunities to review their learning; assessment activities are built into the planning; and, simple, effective mechanisms are in place for recording progress against the expectations in the agreed syllabus.

## **Quality of the curriculum in RE**

The quality of the curriculum in RE is good with outstanding features

- Very close attention is given to meeting the demands of the locally agreed syllabus. A very detailed scheme of work is in place which provides a broad and balanced curriculum, incorporating elements of innovation and originality.
- Good use is made of the levels of attainment in the structure of the planning to ensure that there is effective continuity and progression in pupils' learning. The curriculum also takes good account of the diversity of pupils' needs by using a range of different approaches to learning.
- A particular strength of the planning is the effective structuring of learning to sequence the skills of enquiry and integrate the different aspects of RE attainment.
- Although RE is taught separately by the subject specialist, care is taken to develop links across the curriculum and ensure that the subject contributes to the promotion of the pupils' overall learning skills. For example, the Year 4 work on Passover is linked to the wider topic on slavery. The pattern of delivery of RE is flexible, allowing for some 'blocking' of work to secure more sustained learning on occasions.
- Very good use is made of the local Christian communities and the school's international links to enrich learning in RE. However, there are few opportunities for pupils to meet with or visit representatives from religions other than Christianity. This narrows the potential of the subject to contribute to the promotion of community cohesion in the school.

## **Effectiveness of leadership and management in RE**

The effectiveness of leadership and management in RE is outstanding.

- The subject benefits from the excellent leadership of a very experienced, committed and enthusiastic subject specialist who in turn receives good support from the overall leadership of the school. A very detailed and high-quality RE policy is in place which emphasises the wide contribution that the subject makes to pupils' learning.
- The arrangements for monitoring and reviewing the subject are excellent. Individual units of work are reviewed regularly and good use is made of data on pupils' progress to evaluate the provision. The annual subject action plans are well-conceived, clearly focused on improving the provision and raising standards, and are carefully reviewed and evaluated. In addition, a detailed, accurate subject self-evaluation has been produced using the Ofsted subject grade criteria to judge performance.
- The arrangements for teaching RE and the range of resources to support the subject are excellent. Good use is made of electronic media and artefacts to support effective learning.

- Arrangements for professional development in the subject are also impressive. The RE specialist keeps up-to-date with developments in the subject both locally and nationally. She was previously a member of the local SACRE and has been involved in piloting agreed syllabus materials. Her connections with other local schools have enabled her to share her good practice and she has provided training for trainees and newly qualified teachers in the school.

**Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:**

- extending opportunities for pupils to gain more first-hand experience of religions other than Christianity
- increasing the confidence and ability of Key Stage 1 pupils in using subject- specific terminology when talking about religion.

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

As I explained previously, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority and SACRE and will be published on the Ofsted website. It may be used to inform decisions about any future inspection.

Yours sincerely

**Alan Brine**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**