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Mrs A Jeffery
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Jeffery

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 October 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 including one held in the local church.

The overall effectiveness of RE is satisfactory with some good features.

Achievement in RE

Achievement in RE is satisfactory.

- The attainment of the pupils at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 is just below the expectations set out in the locally agreed syllabus. This represents satisfactory progress. Over their time at the school, pupils develop a broad knowledge and understanding of a range of different religions and an appreciation of their importance. However, their ability to use higher order skills in investigating, interpreting and evaluating religions and beliefs is restricted and this limits the progress of the more able pupils in particular.
- Pupils generally enjoy RE and recognise the importance of valuing diversity and respecting others' opinions. Their attitudes to learning and

behaviour are good. Teachers provide opportunities to extend pupils' oral skills in lessons but the range of writing is quite narrow.

- The subject makes a positive contribution to pupils' cultural development. However, the opportunities to promote spiritual development are less evident because the scope to extend their reflective and creative skills in RE is limited.

Quality of teaching of RE

The quality of teaching of RE is satisfactory with some good features.

- Lessons in RE are well-organised and managed. Pupils are generally aware of the purpose of their learning and some good use is made of pair and small group activities. They are keen to ask questions and when they have opportunity to find out things for themselves and present their own ideas, pupils respond readily.
- Generally however, lessons do not provide enough opportunity for more challenging, extended independent learning. Occasionally, the focus is primarily on giving pupils information and too much use is made of commercial worksheets for recording. When pupils do have opportunities to write more freely, the activities are linked to personal experiences and not related to their study of religion.
- Planning often identifies opportunities for assessment but these are not always used effectively to evaluate the impact of teaching and adjust future learning. Generally assessment arrangements are underdeveloped with little meaningful marking of the pupils' work.

Quality of the curriculum in RE

The quality of the curriculum in RE is satisfactory.

- Close attention is paid to the locally agreed syllabus in planning the curriculum. Good account is taken of the pupils' diverse religious backgrounds. However, the process of developing outcomes matched to the pupils' needs and of linking the two areas of attainment are proving challenging. As a result, the structure of the medium-term planning does not always build a clear pattern of progression into the pupils' learning.
- On occasions, the pattern of delivery, which is generally in weekly sessions, is adjusted to allow for more sustained work and to encourage stronger cross-curricular links.
- Good use is made of the local church which is a rich resource for learning. The school has recognised that, while use was made of non-Christian communities in previous years this needs to be reinvigorated and extended further.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in RE

The effectiveness of leadership and management in RE is satisfactory with some good features.

- The subject benefits from the committed and experienced leadership. Opportunities have been taken to work closely with colleagues, both formally and informally, in developing policies and planning for RE. Strong links have been forged with the local interfaith centre to enrich the subject's resources. Similarly, the local authority RE network and subject support have been used effectively.
- Arrangements for monitoring the subject are currently too informal but a target for improvement. The annual subject review and action plan highlight key areas for improvement although these are largely focused on management tasks rather than raising attainment.
- The subject makes a positive contribution to the overall ethos of respect within the school and its commitment to promoting community cohesion.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- raising standards in RE by:
 - introducing more challenge and independence particularly for the more able
 - developing planning to incorporate more differentiation and assessment
 - integrating the two areas of attainment, 'learning about' and 'learning from' religion, more effectively in pupils' learning
- extending the arrangements for monitoring RE across the school.

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