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Mrs J Cole
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Cole

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 12 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: observation of three lessons; interviews with staff and pupils; and scrutiny of curriculum planning and assessment records.

The overall effectiveness of RE is satisfactory.

Achievement in RE

Achievement in RE is satisfactory.

- Pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 have developed some familiarity with a range of aspects of religion. They are aware of celebrations and festivals that happen but have yet to develop confidence in talking about religious ideas. This is because many pupils are at the very early stages of learning English and, therefore, their framework of language within which to place their learning about different aspects of religion and belief is underdeveloped. However, the school supports this well by teaching many aspects of the subject in the pupils' first language.
- While the progress pupils make across Key Stage 2 is varied, overall achievement is satisfactory. Some pupils are able to develop lines of enquiry and undertake independent research into some of aspects of

religion. Elsewhere, pupils' progress is more modest, because activities tend to focus on gathering information about religion rather than investigating questions that are more challenging or exploring their own ideas about religion.

- Pupils have positive attitudes towards their learning and show respect towards different points of view. Behaviour is usually good. Throughout the school great attention is paid to ensuring that the subject makes a very positive contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. As a result, they appreciate the way religion is part of a wider pattern of cultural and social diversity.

Quality of teaching of RE

The quality of teaching of RE is satisfactory.

- Teaching involves a number of good features. The arrangements for inclusion of all pupils are good. Effective in-class support and careful planning ensure pupils of all ages and abilities are engaged in their learning. Skilful attention is paid to the needs of those pupils who speak English as an additional language. Much of the learning encourages the active participation of all the pupils, and careful attention is paid to securing the interest of boys.
- Teachers use good stimulus activities to engage the pupils' interest and ensure that they are actively involved in their learning. Good-quality displays related to RE around the building also help to promote pupils' interest and enthusiasm for the subject. Lessons are typified by excellent relationships, mutual respect, humour and warmth.
- At its best, teaching is imaginative and lively. Lessons proceed at a good pace and effective use is made of discussion, exposition and questioning. While the best teaching secures good sustained learning which is based on clear objectives, occasionally these features are less evident. When this occurs, learning is not as challenging or focused. Moreover, activities are not sufficiently differentiated to meet the needs of all pupils.
- Pupils' attainment is regularly assessed through cross-curricular links with writing. However, tasks set do not always allow pupils to demonstrate their knowledge or ability to engage with, and respond to, the meaning of religious material.

Quality of the curriculum in RE

The quality of the curriculum in RE is satisfactory.

- Detailed long- and medium-term plans are in place. The use of a variety of ways of organising the curriculum, sometimes linked to opportunities for fieldwork or use of visitors, enables teachers to forge appropriate links with other areas of the curriculum and with collective worship. Planning sometimes over-emphasises the use of themes resulting in pupils only acquiring a basic level of understanding of each religion. This is at the

expense of making each unit of work more challenging in terms of developing the important skills of enquiry, investigation and evaluation.

- The organisation of the curriculum has been guided in part by the recognition of the need to value and celebrate the pupils' own faith traditions. However, the school has gone much further in developing the ways in which RE can promote cohesion and harmony in the wider community. The link to the local Connecting Communities project has yielded good results. A particular strength is the way that work on religious belief and practice is placed within a pattern of wider work on intercultural education, global awareness and fundraising. A further strength is the way in which the project is providing opportunities for parents and governors to develop links with other communities.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in RE

The effectiveness of leadership and management in RE is satisfactory.

- There is a strong collegiate approach to leadership of the subject. The school has a commitment to improving RE provision within its wider drive to promote pupils' well-being.
- The overall ethos of learning in the subject encourages a positive attitude towards faith and diversity among the pupils. The curriculum has been developed to ensure that the needs of pupils from the different faith traditions are appropriately respected.
- The school is working closely with the governors and has undertaken a careful review of the nature and make-up of the local religious communities. It works in close partnership with the local Christian and Muslim clergy to establish a pattern of activities using local resources to enhance learning.
- Appropriate strategies are in place to monitor and evaluate the quality of provision. The arrangements for assessing pupils' progress are sound; however, limited use is made of the information gained from assessments to plan increasingly challenging work.
- The subject has sound capacity for further improvement and clear links are being forged between the development of RE and wider initiatives in the school, particularly in relation to curriculum planning and community cohesion.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- making greater use of thinking and enquiry skills to secure greater challenge in pupils' learning.

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. It may be used to inform decisions about any future inspection. Except in the case of academies, a copy of this letter is also being sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

Jacqueline Wordsworth
Her Majesty's Inspector