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11 November 2010

Mrs E Langford and Mrs L Statham
Acting Headteachers
Beamont Community Primary School
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Dear Mrs Langford and Mrs Statham

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 3 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; a meeting with the local vicar; and observation of five lessons and an assembly.

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

Achievement in RE

Achievement in RE is satisfactory with good features.

- The attainment of the pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 is broadly in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. This represents satisfactory progress overall. Progress across Key Stage 1 is good.
- By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils are able to link different aspects of a religion together when, for example, exploring the festival of Diwali. They show a clear appreciation of the importance of religion in people's lives. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils extend their understanding across a wide range of religions. Pupils in Year 6, for example, were able to explain some of the key features of a Muslim prayer.
- The strength of the pupils' attainment is in the breadth of their knowledge and understanding of religions. They make less progress in using the more

challenging skills of enquiry and in developing the ability to debate and discuss ideas and issues related to religion. As a result, the older and more able pupils are not always extended sufficiently. There is, for example, very little evidence of pupils working independently or producing more challenging forms of writing in RE.

- Pupils' attitudes are very good. They respond well and sustain attention in lessons. The contribution of RE to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. In one lesson, they engaged well in creating a shield to express their fears and courage in response to the story of David and Goliath.

Quality of teaching of RE

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

- Lessons are well-organised. Teachers prepare carefully to ensure their subject knowledge is at an appropriate level. They convey a genuine sense of enthusiasm and often use a wide range of lively and interesting activities and resources. In one Year 4 lesson on Islam, an interactive mosque tour was used well to extend pupils' learning. Some good use is made of questioning and discussion to prompt learning and check pupils' progress.
- Teachers usually explain the purpose of the lessons carefully and the activities are generally well structured and ordered to help the pupils make progress. Occasionally, where teaching is least effective, tasks set are too low level and the pupils are not challenged sufficiently. Too much use is made of commercial worksheets and closed written activities.
- In some lessons, tasks are not differentiated to match the range of pupils' needs and those of the more able in particular are not well met. Generally the scope for independent learning and for pupils to take an active role in identifying issues to be explored is limited.
- Assessment in RE is satisfactory although the limited attention to identifying levels in planning restricts its effectiveness.

Quality of the curriculum in RE

The quality of the curriculum in RE is satisfactory with some good features.

- Close attention is paid to the locally agreed syllabus in planning the curriculum. Although this has ensured a good coverage of the religions and topics within the syllabus, the planning does not always challenge pupils sufficiently.
- The strengths of the curriculum lie in the breadth and balance of study, the comprehensive scheme of work, and the range of enrichment activities. Good use is made of the local religious communities to provide pupils with first-hand experiences of religion. These strengths contribute to the teachers' confidence in delivering the subject. A range of models of delivery are used, including some blocking of work to provide more intensive opportunities for study.

- Although the schemes of work are fully in place, their quality is limited. Little reference is made to levels in planning, to how work might be differentiated, or to clarifying the core purpose of a unit of work and how each builds on prior learning. On occasions, and particularly in the work on Christianity, the rationale for the pattern of learning can be unclear.
- Emphasis is placed on identifying the cross-curricular links with RE. In practice, some of these are not developed sufficiently, particularly in relation to extending pupils' literacy and thinking skills.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in RE

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

- Two enthusiastic, experienced subject coordinators ensure that RE has a strong profile in the school and that teachers are provided with clear direction and a range of lively and engaging resources. RE is always taught by the class teacher to ensure that links with other aspects of pupils' learning can be maintained. RE makes a positive contribution to the promotion of community cohesion and pupils develop respect for religious and cultural diversity.
- The process of subject monitoring, reviewing and action planning is underdeveloped. While the pattern of monitoring is clear and RE is included in the school development plan, the pattern of evaluation lacks a sharp edge and improvement is largely focused on management tasks rather than strategies to raise attainment.
- The subject fully meets statutory requirements and a clear and appropriate RE policy is in place. There have been few structured opportunities for subject professional development. The school has found it difficult to access RE support from the local authority and SACRE.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- extending the level of challenge in learning in RE by:
 - introducing more independent learning, particularly for the older and more able pupils
 - incorporating clearer differentiation and a stronger sense of the purpose and progression in planning the curriculum
 - using a wider range of higher-level literacy tasks within RE
- sharpening the process of monitoring and improving 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