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Mrs J Fox
Headteacher
Herons Moor Community Primary School
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Dear Mrs Fox

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 9 February 2011 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 a Year 1 church visit.

The overall effectiveness of RE is satisfactory.

Achievement in RE

Achievement in RE is satisfactory.

- The standards gained by the pupils by the end of both key stages are broadly in line with the expectations in the locally agreed syllabus. The pattern of the progress made by the pupils is uneven across the school and is satisfactory overall.
- Pupils enjoy RE. They demonstrate considerable ability to consider a range of religious and human questions and issues and make good progress in thinking and articulating their feelings about life and the questions it raises. They are quick to express their own ideas and to 'wow' when unusual artefacts are produced. As a result, their spiritual development is

in many aspects good as is their personal development generally. However, their ability to reflect in the context of RE is sometimes developed without reference to the broader religious ideas that the agreed syllabus requires.

- Pupils' knowledge and understanding of Christianity are good, particularly among Year 5 and Year 6 pupils. Throughout the school, knowledge of other religions is considerably weaker, and this weakens pupils' cultural and social development. It also reduces opportunities for more able pupils in Years 5 and 6 to achieve the higher levels and, consequently, there is some underachievement among these pupils.
- Pupils' achievement across the six areas of the agreed syllabus is uneven, being strongest in relation to 'exploring human identity, personality and experience' and 'beliefs, ideas and feelings'. Pupils occasionally make good progress in 'exploring the world in which we live' although the focus of their learning is sometimes not sufficiently related to world religions.

Quality of teaching of RE

The quality of teaching of RE is satisfactory.

- Where RE is effective, teachers use a range of teaching strategies, such as discussion, pair and group work, and occasionally more reflective experiential activities. The school has some good RE resources which are sometimes used well to enliven lessons or occasionally to encourage more independent learning.
- Teachers are skilled in supporting and engaging pupils, but across the school the quality of teaching in RE is variable. It is clear from teachers' planning and pupils' work that RE is taken seriously by some teachers while others give it less time and have a less developed subject knowledge.
- Some of the work set for the more able pupils does not challenge them sufficiently. The gaps in some teachers' subject expertise reduces their ability to extend pupils' depth of understanding of religious material.
- The school has begun to assess pupils' work in RE and a simple but effective recording system is used. But day-to-day assessment is less well developed. Overall, practice is very variable and pupils are not always given a clear idea about their success and their next steps in learning.

Quality of the curriculum in RE

The quality of the curriculum in RE is satisfactory.

- The curriculum meets statutory requirements and enables teachers and pupils to meet the objectives of the Early Years Foundation Stage and the locally agreed syllabus, although not in as much depth as intended.
- The school is beginning to experiment with blocked units of RE. It is already apparent that this has the advantage of allowing pupils time to

focus on work in depth, but the innovation needs to be carefully monitored to ensure that its benefits are properly assessed.

- Long-term planning is based heavily on the agreed syllabus and accompanying guidance. This ensures that on paper there is a balanced coverage of all aspects of the subject. However, continuity and progression are not strengths in the planning.
- The quality of the curriculum is not consistent and the school has yet to establish clearly defined and shared approaches to planning. Little use is made of levels to inform planning and, as a result, the work does not always match the pupils' needs. In addition, the time being allocated to RE across the school is not carefully monitored and there is some inconsistency in securing pupils' full subject entitlement.
- The school has devised some very good enrichment experiences in the context of RE. It has developed very productive links with the two local community churches which contribute to the confidence with which teachers and pupils approach Christianity in comparison with other religions that are not represented locally.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in RE

The effectiveness of leadership and management in RE is satisfactory.

- RE is led and managed by a well-qualified and enthusiastic teacher who has created a good selection of resources and excellent working relationships with local churches and other faith communities further afield. She teaches in Reception and her opportunities to keep abreast of teaching and learning in Key stages 1 and 2 are limited.
- RE is well organised with a clearly defined policy and curriculum. The subject leader annually monitors the subject and is aware of the uneven quality of RE across the school. RE was last subject to a full-school scrutiny three years ago, in accordance with school monitoring policy. The scrutiny was thorough but insufficient action was taken to address some of the issues identified.
- The subject leader takes full advantage of local authority training and has played an active part in developing the current locally agreed syllabus.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- making lesson planning and teaching more explicitly focused on the religions pupils should learn about to improve their progress over the wider scope of the subject
- challenging appropriately the more able pupils
- using the implementation of a new agreed syllabus to improve teachers' subject knowledge and to ensure that all staff know the curriculum structure they are working to, give an appropriate time to the subject, and

show clearly in their learning how the broad requirements of the agreed syllabus are being addressed.

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

Barbara Wintersgill
Her Majesty's Inspector