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Mrs P Powrie  
Headteacher  
Spooner Row Primary School  
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Dear Mrs Powrie

### **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 20 January 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.

The overall effectiveness of RE is satisfactory, with a number of good features.

#### **Achievement in RE**

Achievement in RE is satisfactory.

- By the end of Key Stage 2, the standards reached by most pupils are at least in line with the expectations set out in the locally agreed syllabus. In some cases, their attainment goes beyond this standard. They make steady progress from their experience in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils are able to talk about the meaning of stories and use basic terms to describe religious practices. They ask pertinent questions, for example about the different ways in which Hindus express their beliefs through dance and music.

- Pupils continue to make progress in Key Stage 2, so that by the end they are able to use religious terms accurately and effectively, for example in the way they talk about some of the common beliefs shared by Christians and Muslims. They also have a sound understanding of the basic beliefs and practices of the religions they have studied. They can engage in their own explorations, using books and information and communication technology (ICT), to develop their knowledge of religions.
- Pupils' personal development, in relation to their own beliefs and values and their ability to express their own ideas, is supported strongly in RE. They enjoy and value opportunities to discuss their ideas with others, and can use examples from religious traditions to support their views. They have a strong sense of the importance of what they learn in RE for understanding the world in which they are growing up, and for valuing diversity. They are aware of the contrast between their own cultural and religious environment and that of the wider world. They recognise the need to understand and respect cultures different from their own.

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

The quality of teaching of RE is good.

- Lessons are prepared well. Pupils enjoy a variety of learning activities and participate enthusiastically. They are keen to ask questions and to respond to one another and their teachers. They learn well both in groups and on their own. Lessons are supported with a variety of resources and ICT is used effectively to stimulate learning.
- Teachers have a strong focus on matching learning to the needs and abilities of pupils. This was seen to good effect in work undertaken across the age range during a celebration day on the theme of the festival of Divali. The objectives for pupils' learning at each stage were progressive and challenging. They provided the basis for older pupils to focus on the meaning and importance of the celebrations for Hindus and on what pupils might learn for themselves from these experiences, such as the significance of symbols and the part they play in their own lives.
- Teachers are informed and prepared sufficiently well in lessons to answer pupils' questions. They are, however, aware of their need to develop their own subject knowledge further to boost their own confidence and extend pupils' understanding of religion.
- Marking and assessment reflect the whole-school approach, so that pupils' work is monitored regularly, both formally and informally. The processes of assessment for learning are used to encourage pupils' development. Comments, questions and suggestions support their written work. In the early years, each pupil's 'learning journey' is recorded with examples drawn from across the curriculum, including RE. The school is aware that it needs to embed these processes more effectively in RE as pupils progress through Key Stage 2.

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

The quality of the curriculum in RE is satisfactory.

- The school is in the process of developing the curriculum on the basis of the locally agreed syllabus. This is being used effectively to focus teaching on both the 'learning about' and 'learning from' aspects of the subject. Planned work in the medium term particularly has made effective use of subject guidance in the syllabus and of other nationally prepared units of work. As a result, planning so far incorporates clear structure and progression.
- Pupils receive their entitlement to RE throughout the school, though the structure and organisation of the curriculum varies between the key stages. Their learning is helpfully extended through enrichment activities, and particularly through celebration days, which pupils enjoy and participate in enthusiastically. However, pupils have little opportunity to meet and engage with representatives of some of the religious traditions they study.
- The structure and delivery of the curriculum helpfully ensure that pupils are introduced to religion in such a way that knowledge and information are used to stimulate interest, awareness and reflection rather than the mere acquisition of facts. A lesson with a group of pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage showed how this was achieved through a focus on the rainbow in the story of Noah, providing good opportunities for linking a range of curricular goals.

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

The effectiveness of leadership and management in RE is satisfactory with some good features and with strong potential for further development.

- As the RE coordinator, you have encouraged the school to focus on the contribution of the subject to pupils' own spiritual and moral development, and their growing awareness of cultures, beliefs and values different from their own. In conjunction with developments in the core subjects across the school, and using the structure provided by the locally agreed syllabus, this is now starting to have a direct impact on the quality of planning, teaching, learning and assessment in the subject. The current organisation of the subject through the school, with planning and teaching devolved to class teachers with the younger pupils, and managed by you in Key Stage 2, supports progression, though it does not always ensure continuity of learning.
- To ensure further progress in the subject, the school recognises the need for professional development among teachers to increase their confidence in dealing with religion in the classroom, particularly with younger pupils. Current skills within the teaching staff provide a basis for more sharing of good practice, and an effective strategy for monitoring and supporting staff will also serve to enhance the subject provision.

- Because the subject leaders are well focused, and because teachers support the direction and emphasis of the subject within the curriculum, the school has good potential to develop RE further. You have identified the need for a clear and affirming policy statement for RE to provide direction and guidance for staff, pupils and their parents and carers.

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

- ensuring that teachers receive further support and guidance in developing their own subject understanding
- securing opportunities for monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning in RE
- providing a policy statement for RE for the benefit of all stakeholders.

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

**John Rudge**  
**Additional Inspector**