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Mr A Spreadborough
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Dear Mr Spreadborough

Ofsted 2011–12 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 22 June 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.

Achievement in RE

Achievement in RE is satisfactory.

- Standards across the school in RE are in line with those outlined in the Shropshire agreed syllabus. Pupils in Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 develop a familiarity with a range of aspects of religion. Most pupils are able to respond to and identify various festivals, celebrations and traditional stories, sometimes suggesting why they are important to believers. Pupils in Key Stage 2 show appropriate respect for people's beliefs and practices, particularly those of the Christian tradition, but they are less secure in explaining and investigating the beliefs, practices and teachings of the other main faiths.
- Pupils' progress is satisfactory 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. Moreover, limited use is made of extended independent activities in RE. As a result, the progress made by more able pupils is sometimes restricted.

- The contribution of RE to supporting pupils' personal development is good. Pupils show positive attitudes to the subject. In lessons, pupils' work well in pairs and groups. Even the youngest pupils show respect for the others within the school. Pupils know about their local community and have some sense of the wider world, appreciating that there are people who have different faiths or religions but their understanding of what it is like to live in a multicultural society is more limited.

Quality of teaching in RE

The quality of teaching in RE is satisfactory.

- Much teaching is characterised by clear structuring of lessons, very positive relationships with pupils and sound subject knowledge. Learning often proceeds at an appropriate pace and sound use is made of exposition and questioning to stimulate and engage pupils' interest. However, much of the work is aimed at the whole class and so older or the more able pupils, in particular, are not always given the challenge they need to improve their work further. Activities are not sufficiently differentiated to meet the needs of all pupils.
- Teachers research the topics well and often present information accurately and carefully. Information and communication technology and interactive whiteboards are used appropriately to enhance the learning. There is scope to develop more opportunities for extended independent writing in RE.
- Assessment opportunities are developing. The recently introduced arrangements are a positive step in enabling teachers to understand the attainment level at which pupils are working. However, this information is not used to revise teachers' planning. The school recognises it has some way to go to ensure that assessment is built more effectively into the planning to pitch the work to meet the needs of all pupils and to make the judgements of progress more reliable. Marking is completed regularly, but does not always enable the pupils to have a clear idea of how to improve their work or how to reach higher levels.

Quality of the curriculum in RE

The quality of the curriculum in RE is satisfactory.

- Detailed long- and medium-term plans are in place. While careful thought is given to ensuring that all of the required topics are included, less attention is paid to the systematic development of the higher order skills of the subject. Therefore, planning overemphasises subject content at the expense of making each unit of work more difficult in terms of developing the important skills of enquiry and evaluation. This is because the school has yet to implement fully the 2009 locally agreed syllabus. Much of the school's work still follows the previous agreed syllabus. This has slowed

the progress of developing the teachers' ability to plan more demanding and challenging work because they are unfamiliar with the expectations in the current syllabus. However, the school has plans to make changes to the curriculum in the light of the newly revised agreed syllabus.

- There are some sound opportunities for learning outside the classroom and enrichment activities linked to RE. Good use is made of the local church community and the local Rotary Club to support learning in RE. The school has a link with a Catholic school in Spain which serves to enrich pupils' experience of the diversity of religion. However, given the limited direct experience that most pupils have of other faith communities, there is scope to extend this further.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in RE

The effectiveness of leadership and management in RE is satisfactory.

- A clear RE policy and a scheme of work are in place. A start has been made on self-evaluation, so that strengths and weaknesses have been identified clearly resulting in a commitment to securing further improvement. Monitoring arrangements are presently informal with some scrutiny of teachers' work.
- The school has recognised the need to extend the arrangements for planning and developing assessment in the subject in line with the expectations in the locally agreed syllabus.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- using the 2009 agreed syllabus more effectively to improve planning and securing a greater consistency in the quality of assessment of RE
- ensuring that marking helps pupils to understand how to improve their work
- extending the opportunities for pupils to have first-hand opportunities of a wider range of religious communities through the use of visits and or visitors.

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 published on the Ofsted website and will be sent to 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