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Mr B Myatt
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Dear Mr Myatt

Ofsted 2011–12 subject survey inspection programme: religious education (RE)

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and students, during my visit on 13 and 14 June 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 students; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of students' work; and observation of three lessons.

The overall effectiveness of RE is good.

Achievement in RE

Achievement in RE is good.

- RE is taught through a humanities curriculum which is provided for all students in Years 10 and 11. Results in the humanities GCSE over recent years have been significantly above average. Senior and department leaders are confident that the trend will continue for the current Year 11 students. This represents good achievement.
- Students are able to work independently when given the opportunity, taking the initiative in their work and when working with others. Students apply a range of higher level skills to their studies such as analysis, interpretation, investigation and evaluation. This is particularly evident in the assessment tasks that they undertake as part of their accreditation.

- Although students are able to reflect on ethical and moral issues considerably, a routine linking of their study of religion and belief to their own, more personal, reflections on issues of meaning and purpose is developed relatively less well. This reflects a shortcoming in curricular provision.
- The contribution of RE to students' personal development is good. It is particularly strong in developing students' moral and cultural development. Their understanding of cultural diversity is developed sensitively and well. Students appreciate the value of respect for different religious and cultural traditions in modern Britain and globally.

Quality of teaching in RE

The quality of teaching in RE is good.

- Students enjoy and achieve in lessons that have variety and challenge that are routinely built into learning. In the most effective lessons seen, there was a brisk pace and teaching ensured active participation by all students. For example, in one lesson where students had already done some research into aspects of religions as a homework task, their learning was enhanced during the course of the lesson through an imaginative use of resources, planned group work and clear tasks. The impact on students' learning was that they had a secure understanding about religion to better explore the causes, types and consequences of religious discrimination.
- Typically, lessons have a clear structure; students know what the learning intentions are and checks on the pace of learning during the lessons help teachers to refocus their efforts where necessary so that students make the expected gains. Students' behaviour in the lessons seen was good.
- Formal marking of assessed tasks is detailed and enables students to have good feedback on strengths and how they can improve their work. Students' involvement in assessing their own and others' work helps to promote good learning.

Quality of the curriculum in RE

The quality of the curriculum in RE is variable but satisfactory overall.

- The department is strongly committed to providing enriching experiences so that students can develop their critical as well as more personal skills. The curriculum structure seeks to enable students to develop positive attitudes, values and dispositions. This aim is achieved successfully.
- There is an effective promotion of learning where the curriculum planning and teaching require students to investigate and evaluate moral and ethical issues. However, the provision is limited because students do not have sufficient opportunities to develop their understanding of religion and how this links to the deeper aspects of human experience.
- The curricular provision has been checked to ensure that the humanities examination syllabus meets the Leicestershire agreed syllabus requirements. However, some elements of the agreed syllabus are not as

fully covered and the provision in the sixth form is limited. The use of visits and visitors to enrich students' experience of religious diversity is underdeveloped.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in RE

The effectiveness of leadership and management in RE is good.

- The drive for improvement is based on a secure monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning within the department, underpinned by effective senior leaders' management and support. The priorities for improvement for the department link well into whole-school priorities. Modelling and sharing of effective teaching and learning help to support two newly qualified teachers.
- The team of teachers are led well by the head of department. All are enthusiastic about what they teach and their clear focus on the quality of students' outcomes ensures that strategies deployed for improvement are effective.
- The department's provision makes a good contribution to the promotion of community cohesion.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring that the curriculum at Key Stage 4 includes a broader coverage of religion and belief so that students develop a deeper understanding of the role of religion in contemporary society
- extending opportunities for students to have first-hand experience of members of religious communities, through for example, contact with visiting speakers
- improving the quality of learning opportunities in the sixth form to better meet the requirements set out in the Leicestershire agreed syllabus.

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

Dilip Kadodwala
Her Majesty's Inspector