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Mrs P Bassindale  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Bassindale

### **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 29 September 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 good.

### **Achievement in RE**

Achievement in RE is satisfactory with some good features.

- Most pupils make good progress during lessons, where they engage enthusiastically in activities and respond well to invitations to reflect on their learning. Year 1 and 2 pupils responded well to opportunities to reflect in depth on the beauty of the world. Year 5 and 6 pupils responded very well to the novel *I am David* and demonstrated insights into what it was like for Jewish children during the war.
- Pupils make only satisfactory progress over time. This is because the curriculum devotes more attention to 'learning from' than 'learning about' and provides too few opportunities for pupils to build on previous learning about religions. As a result, Year 6 pupils were confused as to which religion some aspects were associated. Pupils' work demonstrated that they had made progress in learning about Buddhism on a whole-school

'Buddha Day' but because the curriculum did not provide sufficient opportunities to reinforce this learning, much of it was forgotten.

- Pupils' attitudes towards RE are very good. They respond positively to lessons and take seriously the values that underpin the subject and the school.

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

The quality of teaching in RE is good.

- Teachers have a clear understanding of the subject and teach it confidently.
- Planning is clear and well organised but is only now in the process of being linked to the two attainment targets in the new agreed syllabus.
- Some very good resources are used. Year 6, for example, made good progress through encounters with novels about the lives of Jewish people during the Second World War.
- Teachers use a very good variety of teaching strategies which stimulates and engages pupils. They set interesting group tasks and challenge pupils; although pupils are not encouraged enough to ask questions about religious belief and practice.
- Low ability pupils are supported well during lessons. High ability pupils are given opportunities to take leading roles but are not always given sufficiently challenging tasks for them to achieve the highest possible levels.

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

The quality of the curriculum in RE is satisfactory.

- The curriculum meets statutory requirements. The scheme of work for RE is currently being revised to take account of the new Wiltshire agreed syllabus. These changes have not had time to make an impact on pupils' learning over time.
- The outgoing scheme of work is broad and balanced in relation to the religions that are taught but there is sometimes an imbalance between aspects of the subject related to the two attainment targets, with too little attention given to 'learning about' religion.
- Continuity and progression in pupils' learning have not been sufficiently rigorous in the past, but are showing improvement in the sections of the scheme of work being revised.
- The curriculum enables pupils to gain some first-hand experiences of local religious and belief communities. Very good links are made with three local churches.
- RE makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Teachers are committed to using RE to inspire pupils to think about what they believe and what they value.

- The enthusiasm and commitment of teachers involved in implementing the new syllabus suggest that the potential to strengthen the curriculum and assessment is good.

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

The effectiveness of leadership and management in RE is good.

- RE is led and managed effectively by an enthusiastic teacher who is supported by the deputy headteacher. Leaders are aware of most strengths and weaknesses in the subject as a result of monitoring, although this does not yet include lesson observations. An action plan is clearly focused on appropriate priorities for developing the subject.
- The subject leader is currently creating a rigorous and well-balanced scheme of work designed to improve pupils' progress through carefully focused assessment.
- A good selection of resources and sensible use of the Wiltshire Library loans enhances teaching and learning.
- There are plans for the subject leader to take advantage of agreed syllabus training and to have an opportunity to disseminate it to the whole staff.

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

- improving pupils' knowledge and understanding of religions over time by enhancing continuity and progression throughout the curriculum
- providing more opportunities for high ability pupils to reach the highest possible standards.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop RE in the school.

As explained previously, a copy of this letter will be published on the Ofsted website and sent to SACRE. It may be used to inform decisions about any future inspection. A copy of this letter is also being sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

**Barbara Wintersgill**  
**Additional Inspector**