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Mrs S Penny  
Ladybrook Primary School  
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Dear Mrs Penny

**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 19 October 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 three lessons and an assembly.

The overall effectiveness of RE is good.

**Achievement in RE**

Achievement in RE is good.

- Pupils' attainment by the end of both Key Stages 1 and 2 is above the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. This represents good progress. Pupils develop a good level of knowledge and understanding across a range of religions. They apply the skills of investigation when examining religions and beliefs.
- By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils have developed a good range of appropriate language enabling them to talk about different religions. Pupils in Year 2, for example, were able to identify key features of the festival of Divali and see links with their own celebrations. Some more able pupils were able to describe how both Easter and Divali have a pattern leading from sadness to happiness.

- By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils can discuss the key features of a range of religions. They talked eloquently and with confidence about the beliefs of Hinduism and can explain the significance of Jesus in Christianity. In two lessons in Years 4 and 5, pupils could discuss the significance of parables and explain how these contained significant teachings which were important to Christians.
- Older pupils are less confident in discussing issues about the truth and value of religion and the nature of the language of religion. While pupils can relate religious values to their own experience, particularly in the context of Christianity, they are less confident in discussing their own ideas about religion and belief in relation to the traditions they have studied.
- Learning in RE is good. Pupils engage well in, for example, group work, independent research and discussion. They participate effectively in the more creative and active patterns of learning with which they are presented. While there are good examples of pupils developing their information and communication technology skills (ICT) through RE, there is some scope to extend the contribution RE makes to literacy development.
- Pupils enjoy RE and can see its value. They also enjoy the way they learn in RE. As one pupil said, 'RE lessons are always interesting and involve lots of activity'.

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

The quality of teaching in RE is good with some outstanding features.

- Lessons are carefully planned and incorporate well-structured learning which enables all pupils to make good progress. Good use is made of differentiated resources and in-class support to ensure that all pupils achieve well.
- Teaching is very pacy and lively. Teachers explain the purpose of the learning well, using questioning effectively to press pupils to think carefully about their learning. Good use is made of a range of interesting resources, including ICT, to stimulate the pupils' interest. A particular strength is the purposeful and challenging nature of some of the activities. These extend pupils' thinking and promote a wide range of learning skills. In one outstanding Key Stage 1 lesson, pupils were provided with a range of resources materials and asked to work independently and in small groups to find out all they could about the festival of Divali.
- Teachers generally have good subject knowledge. Occasionally, there is uncertainty about how to integrate the school's commitment to enquiry-based learning with some of the lessons. For example, in the drive to encourage pupils to relate aspects of Jesus' teaching to their own lives, the scope for more open enquiry is sometimes lost. The range of writing used in RE, particularly by the older pupils, is sometimes too limited.
- Good use is made of questioning to check pupils' progress. Otherwise the assessment arrangements in RE are limited and inconsistent. While work is

marked, comments rarely refer pupils back to the purpose of the learning. There is no consistent approach to the recording of pupils' progress particularly any understanding they demonstrate orally.

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

The quality of the curriculum in RE is good.

- The RE curriculum focuses on a series of units about Christianity and other major religions. It follows the local authority scheme of work for RE making some adjustments in the pursuit of incorporating greater progression in the pupils' learning.
- Curriculum planning is comprehensive and ensures balanced and broad coverage across Christianity and other major religions. The approach to delivering RE is flexible and allows for some sustained learning and links across the curriculum.
- RE makes a strong contribution to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils recognise the importance of finding out about the beliefs and lifestyles of others and adopt a very positive attitude towards diversity.
- Some features of the curriculum could be developed to secure even better progress for the pupils. Some units of work do not have clearly defined and differentiated learning objectives relevant for the age and ability of the pupils. Where units from the previous agreed syllabus, such as those related to the teachings or life of Jesus, are being revisited to secure progression, the planning does not always make clear enough how a higher level of challenge will be incorporated. By limiting the units to the study of individual religions, the opportunity to incorporate units which focus on wider concepts or aspects of religions and belief is overlooked. A more flexible approach to the curriculum would allow for more creative cross-curricular links and a stronger focus on enquiry.
- While there are some opportunities to enrich pupils' learning in RE, the school has identified the need to extend the scope to visit a wider range of places of worship.

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

The effectiveness of leadership and management in RE is good.

- The leadership of the subject is going through a period of transition and the arrangements for succession planning are good. Subject leadership provides good support for the subject and colleagues. Curriculum planning is comprehensive and the subject has a good profile in the life of the school. A key strength is the way the subject embraces the wider priorities of the school related to active enquiry-based learning and the values of respect for all.
- Arrangements for monitoring, reviewing and improving RE are in place although there is scope to sharpen the process. A clear audit of RE has been undertaken and this rightly recognises many of the strengths of the

provision. The opportunities for the subject leader to undertake sharply focused monitoring of the planning and pupils' work are limited.

- The staffing and resourcing of RE are good. The new subject leader teaches RE in two of the year groups as part of the arrangements for release of other teachers for planning time. This arrangement is well-managed and appropriate. The school has good access to RE resources and the use of ICT by teachers and pupils is a strength.
- The opportunities for professional development in RE have been limited. For example, while the school was represented at the launch of the 2011 Stockport agreed syllabus and it has identified some of the more challenging features of the new syllabus, there is a recognition that it needs more guidance to integrate these features within its curriculum but is unsure where to find this support.

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

- reviewing the curriculum to build on the opportunities provided by the introduction of the 2011 Stockport agreed syllabus to:
  - ensure that enquiry-based learning is securely embedded in all areas of the subject
  - incorporate a wider range of units more closely related to the areas of enquiry identified in the syllabus
  - explore the scope for more links with wider topics in the curriculum including literacy
- using the levels of attainment in the agreed syllabus to incorporate clearer differentiated learning objectives for each unit of work to support more effective assessment
- extending the opportunities for pupils to have first-hand experiences of the diversity of religions within the local community.

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

**Alan Brine**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**