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Mr A Reed
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Dear Mr Reed

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 28 and 29 November 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; and observation of four lessons and an assembly.

The overall effectiveness of RE is good.

Achievement in RE

Achievement in RE is good.

- The standards attained by the students at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4 are broadly in line with the expectations set out in the Lincolnshire agreed syllabus and in the GCSE examination grade descriptors. The department's policy to enter all students for the GCSE examinations ensures that students have equal access to accreditation over Years 9, 10 and 11. By the time students leave, the great majority of them attain at least a pass grade in the full course GCSE examination and a significant proportion attain grades C or above.
- Students' achievement is good from their often low starting points in the subject. By the end of Year 11, students can explain the role and impact of religion in contemporary society confidently. They have a good grasp of a variety of Christian beliefs and practices and can compare similarities

and differences between Christianity and Judaism with growing discernment. Students' ability to explore, analyse and evaluate religion and belief is a strength. Effective teaching ensures that students can respond meaningfully to religious and moral issues and reflect on their own views in an informed way. Students have some basic knowledge of one or two other religions, in addition to Christianity and Judaism, but there is a lack of depth in students' understanding, for example of Hinduism and Buddhism. This weakness is now being addressed through revised schemes of work for Years 7 and 8.

- Students' personal development in the context of RE is good. Their attitudes to RE are positive and they behave well in lessons. The subject makes an important contribution to developing students' appreciation of religious and cultural diversity. Across both key stages, students 'learn about' and 'learn from' religion in a balanced way. Students routinely link their study of belief to their own experiences and readily reflect on different views of meaning and purpose in life.

Quality of teaching in RE

The quality of teaching in RE is good.

- Teachers have good subject knowledge which they use skilfully to probe students' knowledge, thereby deepening their understanding of the religions they study. Lessons are structured well to engage students from the outset. Students have a clear view of learning outcomes and the checking of learning during and at the end of lessons is used effectively to promote good learning. The emphasis on developing oracy skills and support for students who are at an early stage of speaking English ensures that all have access to the learning and achieve well.
- Students are encouraged to record their learning in a range of ways and there are good displays of their work in classrooms. Homework tasks usually extend students' learning beyond that achieved in lessons.
- Assessment procedures are fit for purpose and good overall. An established monitoring system records results from regular assessments. Teachers share their understanding of the agreed syllabus level descriptors and this helps to ensure consistency in assessment. Teachers' regular marking and feedback give clear guidance to students for improvement. Students are expected to respond to the guidance so that opportunities for maximising improvement are not missed.

Quality of the curriculum in RE

The quality of the curriculum in RE is satisfactory with some good elements.

- A distinctive feature of the curriculum is the opportunity for students to study the GCSE short course in Year 9 with a view to attaining a GCSE full course accreditation by the end of Year 11. This means that students' knowledge and understanding of Christianity and Judaism are developed to least a reasonable level.

- Revised schemes of work and teachers' planning for Years 7 and 8 have a sharper focus on developing an enquiry-based approach to learning, extending the breadth of religions to include Islam and Hinduism in addition to Christianity and Judaism. Students welcome this breadth and would like to see it continue into their studies in Years 10 and 11.
- 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.

- RE is led by an experienced and enthusiastic subject leader who has a very good grasp of the subject and how it can enrich students' learning and personal development. Support for the teaching team is strong, as is their commitment to raising standards of attainment in the subject. Teamwork is used effectively, for example in revising planning which benefits students directly.
- The subject leader is keen to provide innovation so that students continue to be interested and challenged. A strong direction is given to build on students' current achievement.
- The routine monitoring of provision and students' progress gives the department and the senior leaders an accurate view of the strengths and areas for further development. Action planning identifies the right priorities for continuing development.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- maximising opportunities for students to develop more in-depth knowledge and understanding about a wider range of religions
- extending opportunities for students to have first-hand experience of members of religious communities, through for example, contact with visiting speakers and trips to places of worship.

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

Dilip Kadodwala
Her Majesty's Inspector