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Mr P Falkus  
Headteacher  
Bathampton Primary School  
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Dear Mr Falkus

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

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 7 February 2012 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 good.

- Achievement across the school is good. Pupils make satisfactory progress at Key Stage 1 but achieve particularly well at Key Stage 2.
- By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils can suggest simple meanings for symbols and identify some features of religions but struggle to link them. This makes it difficult for them to be aware of similarities between religions. Their achievement in relation to the area of attainment 'learning from religion' is good. They respond well to questions about people's experiences, for example those of Joseph and his brothers, and are beginning to discriminate between positive and negative values. There is some underachievement at Key Stage 1, particularly among high ability pupils who are not always challenged sufficiently.

- Key Stage 2 pupils achieve particularly well. They develop a depth and breadth of understanding about the religions they study and can talk confidently about different aspects of religion. They are very aware of the impact of religion on people's lives and the fact that different religions can result in very different lifestyles. Several Year 6 pupils show a mature appreciation of the difference between people of faith making comments such as 'what is normal to us isn't normal to someone else' and 'we need to be able to get inside other people's shoes to understand them better'.
- Pupils' attitudes to RE are excellent. They enjoy the subject and understand its relevance to living in the modern world.

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

The quality of teaching in RE is good.

- Teachers have good subject expertise, which lends confidence to their teaching. They have a good understanding of the value of RE, which they communicate to their pupils.
- The school has a good range of resources, which is used creatively to stimulate pupils' interest and facilitate challenging enquiries. For example, pupils drew accurate conclusions about the relationship of Christian and Islamic artefacts to the practice of prayer in those religions. They were less clear about prayer in Judaism.
- Collaborative work is a particular strength of lessons and pupils extend their understanding by listening to each other. For example, Year 4 pupils in one group compared their experiences of different Christian denominational worship, which the teacher reinforced by showing them the use of the rosary in Catholicism.
- No formal assessment takes place in RE, although teachers generally have a sound appreciation of pupils' learning and progress. Progression at Key Stage 2 is good, where the level of challenge in teaching is clearly greater year on year. At Key Stage 1, teachers do not consistently challenge older and more able pupils.

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

The quality of the curriculum in RE is good.

- The curriculum provides a good balance of breadth and depth. Christianity is appropriately represented in the curriculum but pupils also learn about Islam, Judaism, Hinduism and aspects of Buddhism. Sometimes a religion is taught singly and at other times elements of different religions are introduced to give pupils opportunities to compare and contrast religions.
- Continuity and progression in the curriculum are good. The level of challenge increases as pupils move through the school. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 are presented with particular challenge in a unit of work which requires them to compare the beliefs and practices of children from around the world and assess the impact these have on their lives.

- Although the RE curriculum is independent of the planned themes across the school, good links are made where relevant. For example, creative links are made between RE and the study of the Greeks in history. Pupils compare ideas and learn about the work of St Paul against the background of contemporary Greek religion. Similarly, when Year 4 pupils learn about the Romans they look at evidence for Jesus in early Roman writings and the passage of Christianity to Britain through Roman occupation.
- RE makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Their moral development is strengthened through links with personal, social and health education (PSHE). However, on occasions there is confusion between PSHE and RE and work does not build sufficiently on what pupils have studied in RE.
- The school is not well placed geographically to offer pupils a wide range of enrichment opportunities. However, all children at some point visit places of worship in Bristol and parents are often willing to talk to pupils about their beliefs and traditions. Close links exist with the village church and the vicar is a regular visitor to the school.

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

The effectiveness of leadership and management in RE is good.

- You have overall management of RE throughout the school but most of the planning and day-to-day running of the subject is done by a knowledgeable and committed higher-level teaching assistant (HLTA). You are both committed to providing high-quality RE and to promoting pupils' personal development through the subject.
- Although subject monitoring is limited, you have a well-grounded understanding of performance in the subject.
- Resources are used well and the HLTA makes a highly effective contribution to the quality of RE provision throughout the school.

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

- raising the level of challenge for the more able pupils in Key Stage 1
- making consistently closer links between the two areas of attainment in RE, 'learning about' and 'learning from' religion.

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**