

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 0300 123 1231
F 020 7421 6855
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



8 March 2012

Mr S Beverley
Headteacher
John Spendluffe Foundation
Technology College
Hanby Lane
Alford
LN13 9BL

Dear Mr Beverley

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

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and students, during my visit on 21 and 22 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 students; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of students' work; and observation of six lessons.

The overall effectiveness of RE is good.

Achievement in RE

Achievement in RE is good.

- Entry for the GCSE short course is very high. The pattern of attainment over recent years is just below average and the gaps are narrowing year-on-year. Attainment by the end of Year 9 is broadly in line with the expectations set out in the Lincolnshire agreed syllabus which the college has chosen to continue to use since conversion to academy status in September 2011.
- By the end of Year 11, the great majority of students make good progress and some make outstanding progress from their well below average starting points. Students have a secure understanding of religion and belief and can express their own insights into social, moral and ethical issues thoughtfully.

- Students enjoy opportunities to work in pairs and small groups and, when required to work independently, they do so with determination. Across both key stages students 'learn about' and 'learn from' religion in a balanced way although work in the latter attainment target is not routinely recorded in students' written work. In the lessons observed and in their work, students show that they are able to link their study of religion and belief to issues of meaning and purpose in life. They raise questions about what they study and are able to interpret and evaluate religion and belief, particularly in their GCSE work. However, students' ability to show creativity, originality and imagination is underdeveloped because they have fewer opportunities to carry out their own investigations in their work.
- Students' personal development is good. They have positive attitudes to learning. They behave well in lessons and value what they study because it helps them to reflect on their own views and those from different perspectives, including non-religious viewpoints. Students develop a strong sense of morality and an appreciation of cultural diversity within national and international contexts.

Quality of teaching in RE

The quality of teaching in RE is good.

- Lessons are structured well to engage students from the outset. Learning intentions are made clear and good use is made of ongoing assessment in lessons to ensure that students continue to make good progress. Strong plenary sessions enable students and teachers to check the quality of learning.
- Teachers use subject expertise effectively to probe students' knowledge, thereby deepening their understanding of religion and belief. This was seen, for example in lessons exploring the origins of the universe and the nature of miracles performed by Jesus. Careful attention is paid to developing students' evaluation skills, for example through the use of self- and peer-assessment.
- Formal marking of work, including assessed tasks, is suitably detailed and enables students to have good feedback on strengths and how they can improve their work. Students have a clear view about their progress towards challenging targets.
- A range of resources, including information and communication technology, is used to enliven learning. Different resources ensure that the broad range of students' learning needs is met well, underpinned by the effective use of questioning by teachers who know the students well. Tasks are usually carefully adapted to ensure that all students have opportunities to participate. Occasionally, there is an overuse of cloze sentence worksheets which limit challenge for students and their more active engagement in learning.

Quality of the curriculum in RE

The quality of the curriculum in RE is good.

- The curriculum is planned well so that students progressively develop their knowledge, understanding and skills across both key stages. Although much of the curriculum in Key Stage 4 and in the current Year 9 is planned around the GCSE syllabus, teaching ensures that students' knowledge and understanding about religion and belief are broadly coherent.
- An enquiry-based approach in Year 7, using an adapted 'opening minds' framework helps to develop students' learning and personal skills. Students enjoy working in teams and in the lessons seen, benefited from sharing their ideas and pooling their particular strengths, for example, when working on a project on individual religions. A helpful set of criteria enables teachers and students to assess how well these skills are being developed. The criteria are less helpful in charting students' progress towards subject-specific knowledge, understanding and skills because the criteria are not sufficiently linked to these specific elements.
- There is a strong commitment in the subject to provide enriching experiences. Visits to the local church and Lincoln Cathedral are enjoyed by students, as are links with schools abroad. However, 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 subject is part of the humanities faculty and RE plays a distinctive role within this structure. A small team of RE teachers are well led by the subject leader who is enthusiastic and a good role model. All staff teaching RE are committed to sustaining and improving students' outcomes.
- The drive for improvement is based on a secure monitoring of teaching and learning in the subject, underpinned by effective senior leaders' line management and support. The priorities for subject improvement link well into whole-college priorities.
- The subject leader keeps abreast of current initiatives through suitable training and networking with other subject leaders in the locality.
- Good leadership and management ensure that the subject makes a notable impact on students' personal development and their wider contribution to the college.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- increasing opportunities for students to carry out more frequent investigations so that they can demonstrate their skills of independence, imagination and creativity
- developing reliable assessments across Year 7 to gauge how well students develop knowledge, understanding and skills related to RE

- extending opportunities for students to have more first-hand experiences of a wider range of different religious and belief communities through, for example, contact with visiting speakers and visits.

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. It may be used to inform decisions about any future inspection.

Yours sincerely

Dilip Kadodwala
Her Majesty's Inspector