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Ms S Pritchard  
Headteacher  
Broadoak Mathematics and Computing College  
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Dear Ms Pritchard

### **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 29 February and 1 March 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 students; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of students' work; and observation of three lessons.

The overall effectiveness of RE is satisfactory with a good capacity for improvement.

#### **Achievement in RE**

Achievement in RE is satisfactory.

- The attainment of the students following the full course GCSE is broadly average and overall they are making good progress against targets. There is insufficient evidence to make a judgement about the achievement of students who are learning RE through a combined personal, social, health and citizenship (PSHCE) course.
- Key Stage 3 students' attainment is generally in line with expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. Students are making satisfactory progress. They have sound knowledge of facts about religions, developing technical terminology and suggesting meanings of religious practices, such as festivals and rites of passage. They understand how religion can influence

the lives and values of individuals, for example Martin Luther King, and can explain contrasting religious attitudes towards important moral dilemmas, such as euthanasia. Students' oracy and literacy develops well through RE.

- In other areas achievement is weaker. Because students' learning about different religions is fragmented, they lack the opportunity to consolidate a coherent knowledge and understanding of the elements of each religion and how these elements interact. Their achievement in relation to some strands of the attainment targets is limited because they have few opportunities to demonstrate achievement in those areas. For example, they have limited understanding of the impact of religion on local, national and international communities; they do not have a sound grasp of the reasons for diversity within and between religions and they are not aware of the wide range of forms of expression through which religious ideas are communicated.
- Students are generally interested in RE and they appreciate how the subject helps them to explore their own and others' beliefs and views.

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

The quality of teaching in RE is satisfactory.

- The quality of teaching in the lessons observed was satisfactory or good. Generally relationships in the classroom are good, as is class management. Teachers have good subject knowledge. They work hard to maintain students' interest and engagement by using a variety of groupings, resources and activities.
- Some excellent resources are available, although they are not used to full advantage in all lessons. One lesson observed set an outstanding example of how a range of resources, including laptops, could be used to motivate and stimulate students.
- The quality of learning support is good and in one case observed outstanding.
- In some respects important innovations in teaching have not yet realised their potential to make a positive impact on students' learning. The quality and consistency of teachers' written feedback on students' work are very good. The department is developing the use of level descriptions in assessment and planning but they are not properly understood with the result that learning objectives are frequently inaccurately levelled and assessments are sometimes overgenerous.
- The potential benefits of setting differentiated learning objectives are hindered by the practice of making all students complete lower-level activities before moving on to work that is suitable for their abilities. Where high achievers are set independent enquiry work, tasks are not broken down into key questions with the result that too much of their work consists of factual accounts.

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

The quality of the curriculum in RE is satisfactory.

- The Key Stage 3 curriculum meets the broad statutory requirements of the locally agreed syllabus. It has been designed to engage students with matters that interest them and the balance between themes and religion receives a generally positive response from students. Students are given the opportunity to develop knowledge of a range of religious traditions and philosophical ideas. Links are made to other curriculum areas, particularly the arts, to promote students' engagement and learning. These could be made more explicit. However, the opportunity to develop learning through engagement with faith communities is very limited.
- RE makes a good contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The development of a GCSE full course option group demonstrates the increasingly positive response of students to the subject. The RE elements of the PSHCE course at Key Stage 4 are made explicit in curriculum planning but there are no records of students' attainment in the RE elements of the course, making it impossible to monitor their progress throughout the school.

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

The effectiveness of leadership and management in RE is satisfactory.

- RE is supported well in the school leadership, and management responsibilities are clearly defined at department and faculty level.
- The RE coordinator and the head of humanities are committed to developing the subject. They have incorporated whole-school initiatives within departmental practices to bring about improvement. For example, by improving assessment practice and by developing opportunities for extended writing.
- Non-specialist teachers have been well supported by the coordinator through individual meetings and detailed planning.
- The subject is monitored very accurately by senior staff and priorities have been accurately identified by subject and senior leaders. Many of these are still in the process of full implementation.
- The department adds value to the life of the school, for example, through its work with students in presenting assemblies.

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

- developing an accurate understanding of the RE level descriptions throughout the faculty
- continuing to develop suitable provision for the most able students
- ensuring that all students are given tasks that match their ability

- providing opportunities for students to engage with people from the religions they are studying and wherever possible, to visit their 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

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