

Aviation House  
125 Kingsway  
London  
WC2B 6SE

T 0300 123 1231  
F 020 7421 6855  
[enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)



10 May 2012

Mr J Morgan  
Associate Headteacher  
Clayton Hall Business and Language College  
Clayton Lane  
Clayton  
Newcastle-under-Lyme  
ST5 3DN

Dear Mr Morgan

**Ofsted 2012–13 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 30 April and 1 May 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.

- Students achieve well across Key Stages 3 and 4 and make good progress. The pattern of the students' attainment in the short course GCSE over recent years is above the national average. Increasing proportions of students gain the highest A\* and A grades, although more girls than boys attain at the highest level.
- The quality of learning in RE is good. The majority of students across both key stages are able to discuss the main features of the religions they have studied. In one lesson, for example, students offered well-presented analytical responses to the issue whether it is ethical to use 'saviour siblings' to save life of another child and how this sits with the belief in the sanctity of life.

- Students enjoy their learning and apply themselves diligently in lessons. Students handle concepts well and can use a wide range of evidence, including biblical views, to justify their own ideas.

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

The quality of teaching in RE is good

- Teaching in RE has many strengths. Teachers' subject knowledge is secure and is supported by a wide range of resources. Teachers' questioning is targeted, open-ended, and often searching.
- Teachers' skills in teaching students to think and to work in teams and pairs are effective. They engage students in deeper levels of analysis, particularly through the direct and systematic teaching of how to learn and then how to present their findings effectively.
- Good opportunities exist for students to demonstrate independent learning and creativity. Teaching enables them to explore a range of faith, moral and ethical issues. As a result, students are well able to understand the significance and impact of commitment and belief on people's lives. Students show respect for the views of their peers and listen patiently to one another's ideas.
- Assessment information is used well to plan learning activities, which meet the range of students' abilities. Good use is made of self- and peer-assessment and carefully structured tasks, which often require a good level of challenge. Moderation of assessments ensures consistency in the application of the set marking criteria.
- Marking is used effectively to guide students as to how they might improve their work and accelerate their progress.

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

The quality of the curriculum in RE is good.

- The department has developed a curriculum that meets the needs and interests of students and fulfils the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus.
- The curriculum at both key stages continues to evolve, resulting in increasingly relevant, varied and interesting learning opportunities for students. For example, from September 2011, all students in Key Stage 4 follow the full GCSE course. However, the department is aware that the schemes of work for Key Stage 3 need to be reviewed in the light of the recently published locally agreed syllabus.
- RE makes a good contribution towards students' personal development. Students demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of moral, ethical and cultural issues. Consequently, they are able to express their views, develop informed arguments, and show respect for the different beliefs, faiths and lifestyles that they study.

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

The effectiveness of leadership and management in RE is good.

- Systems to monitor the effectiveness of the department provision are firmly embedded in the working practice of the school. The senior leadership team gives good support to the department and is fully involved in its action-planning and self-evaluation. Evaluation and analysis rightly focus on the impact that the provision has on students' progress and achievement.
- The head of department has been successful in establishing and then maintaining the good outcomes for students in examinations through their rigorous monitoring of the quality of teaching. However, there has been less emphasis in ensuring that teachers assess students' progress at each stage of the lesson and adapt the learning accordingly, particularly in Key Stage 3.
- The subject has a high profile in the school. Its quality and character are reflective of, and embedded in, the wider values of the school including its emphasis on students' independent learning.

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

- securing the consistency and quality of the curriculum across the department in Key Stage 3.

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

**Jacqueline Wordsworth**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**