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Miss C Thomas
Headteacher
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Dear Miss Thomas

Ofsted 2012–13 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 2 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 pupils; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work; and observation of three lessons.

The overall effectiveness of RE is satisfactory.

Achievement in RE

Achievement in RE is satisfactory.

- Standards across the school are below those outlined in the locally agreed syllabus. Pupils make satisfactory progress but there is some variability within this overall picture.
- Pupils in Key Stage 1 develop some familiarity with a range of aspects of religion. For example, they know the importance that religious stories have in the lives of believers. However, the language which pupils use to talk about different aspects of religion and belief is underdeveloped.
- In Key Stage 2, pupils are aware that religion and beliefs are diverse but do not have systematic knowledge or understanding of the religions studied. The opportunities to integrate learning skills within RE work are not planned systematically enough and this limits pupils' ability to attain at

the highest level. The emphasis placed on eliciting a personal response to religious material is not linked effectively to learning about religion and therefore pupils' learning is often superficial.

- Pupils enjoy the subject. They show positive attitudes to the subject. In lessons, pupils work well in pairs and groups. All pupils show respect for the ideas and beliefs of others.

Quality of teaching in RE

The quality of teaching in RE is satisfactory.

- Relationships are strong and pupils work harmoniously with sustained concentration. Good opportunities are given for pupils to work with a partner and in groups.
- Insecure teacher subject knowledge sometimes results in pupils making uneven or limited progress. On occasions, the lack of a clearly defined RE focus to the learning means that pupils do not always develop a depth or breadth of knowledge and understanding of the religions they study.
- Assessment opportunities are developing. The recently introduced arrangements are a positive step in enabling teachers to understand the level at which pupils are working. The school recognises it has some way to go to ensure that the judgements of progress are reliable.
- Marking is completed regularly but does not always enable the pupils to have a clear idea of the progress they are making or how to improve their work.

Quality of the curriculum in RE

The quality of the curriculum in RE is satisfactory.

- The curriculum is broadly based on the locally agreed syllabus. Core religions are taught at each key stage. However, insufficient attention is paid to the programmes of study for each key stage and this results in an imbalance between the two attainment targets. This prevents pupils from developing a systematic and coherent understanding of religious belief and practice.
- The subject has links with the personal, social and health education programme in the school. Use is made of blocked units of work taught within a cross-curricular framework. For example, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam are studied as part of a whole-school theme on 'who is part of our world'. However, some of these links are tenuous at best and therefore pupils' learning about religion and faith is diluted.
- There are some opportunities for learning outside the classroom and enrichment activities linked to RE. Connections have been formed with local faith groups and a number of visits to places of worship have been undertaken.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in RE

The effectiveness of leadership and management in RE is satisfactory.

- The recently appointed subject leader is enthusiastic and is keen to develop the subject. A start has been made on self-evaluation; strengths and weaknesses have been identified and an action plan produced. Monitoring arrangements are presently informal with some scrutiny of teachers' work.
- The school has recognised the need to extend the arrangements for planning and developing assessment in the subject in line with the expectations in the locally agreed syllabus.
- Opportunities for training among staff have been limited. This has led to a lack of a shared understanding of what is required in RE. For example, there is a lack of clarity about what constitutes learning in RE, personal development and English. Often, religious material is used as a vehicle or stimulus for learning in these and other subjects to the detriment of a clear focus on RE.
- RE makes a satisfactory contribution to the wider aspects of school life in the way that the subject promotes the values of the school.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- improving teachers' subject expertise
- revising the curriculum to ensure that pupils develop a progressive and systematic understanding of religion
- developing opportunities for assessment, using the levels of attainment, so that pupils are aware of how well they are doing.

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