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Mrs C Oki
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Oki

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 14 June 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 satisfactory.

Achievement in RE

Achievement in RE is satisfactory.

- Standards in RE are in line with the expectations in the locally agreed syllabus. Progress is satisfactory, with pupils building on the wide range of religious background that they bring with them on entry to the school.
- Teachers are beginning to see a change in the level and nature of pupils' learning, which they attribute to the very recent introduction of a brand new locally agreed syllabus. Pupils are now able to use an increasing range of skills to investigate religious material.
- Pupils in Key Stage 2 are responding at a more personal level, asking increasingly sophisticated questions; as a result, they can reflect on and make connections between the different aspects of religion and their own experience. Work on the topics of 'angels' and 'messages' demonstrates

pupils' increasing ability to ability to 'stand in the shoes' of a person of faith, seeing the issues from that point of view.

- Pupils in Key Stage 1 are beginning to explore key concepts such as love, worship, and family. They are developing a wide religious vocabulary with which to describe their learning. In lessons, pupils respond well to the interesting activities, including completing simple investigations.
- Pupils are very positive about the subject. They respond well to the opportunities to explore diversity of culture and belief and often show a lively interest in finding out about the lives of others. Pupils develop a strong awareness of the importance of valuing and respecting the beliefs and lifestyles of others. Those interviewed from Year 5 spoke warmly about the value of RE and were able to explain in some detail the way that RE helps them to understand and make sense of the world around them.

Quality of teaching in RE

The quality of teaching in RE is satisfactory.

- Teaching is based on an understanding of the need for investigative learning within an ethos of respect for others. Teachers use great sensitivity when dealing with the different religions, helping pupils recognise and deal with their own misconceptions.
- Good use is made of opportunities for reflection. Discussion and oral work are handled well. Teachers' questioning and explanations are effective. They reflect an understanding of the important of developing pupils' ability to examine and think about the key concepts of RE. For example, a Year 4 lesson on pilgrimage provided an opportunity for the pupils to explore the concept of 'commitment' in depth. However, less use is made of independent writing to extend and deepen pupils' learning.
- At present, levels are not used to differentiate the learning in the planning. However, the recent introduction of 'I can' statements is a useful way of tracking the progress of pupils and identifying any patterns within their achievement.

Quality of the curriculum in RE

The quality of the curriculum in RE is good.

- The RE curriculum meets the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus and is planned to cover the key areas of study. This ensures that good coverage is given to different religions and a balance of work is set across the attainment targets. A clear focus in much of the lesson planning is on a key concept. On occasions, however, the lesson objectives are not focused sufficiently on the concept being studied and the links between various elements of the cycle of enquiry are not explicit enough.
- The programme of enrichment activities, the overall values and ethos of the school, and the opportunities provided to learn about religion through first-hand experience are key factors promoting pupils' good social, moral, spiritual and cultural development in RE. Good use is being made of

visitors and visits to the local places of worship to provide pupils with first-hand experience of religious diversity. The school successfully employs a 'Philosophy for Children' approach to the teaching of aspects of RE.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in RE

The effectiveness of leadership and management in RE is good.

- The subject benefits from thoughtful and determined subject leadership. The good progress made with the implementation of the agreed syllabus reflects the positive approach to planning across the school and the effectiveness of the subject leader.
- A key success has been the involvement of governors in the developments in RE. A number took advantage of the opportunity to review the new locally agreed RE syllabus. Great care has been taken to explain the school's approach to the subject to them in order to secure their trust and confidence. Parents have been encouraged to take an active role in RE by visiting and sharing their experience with the pupils. As a result, the school has been able to use the opportunities provided by RE to promote understanding within the local community.
- An appropriate policy for the subject is in place. A review of the outcomes of monitoring linked to the implementation of the new syllabus has been established. The pattern of monitoring RE has not extended to include observation of teaching.
- The subject has good capacity for further improvement and clear links are being forged between the development of RE and wider initiatives in the school particularly in relation to curriculum planning.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- securing progression in the way concepts are introduced across the year groups
- ensuring that written tasks in RE make a stronger contribution to the promotion of literacy
- structuring tasks to enable pupils to attain at the higher levels.

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