

10 November 2006

Mrs C Woodall
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Woodall

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Religious Education

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 8 November 2006 to look at work in religious education (RE).

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of the subject, the visit had a particular focus on the implementation of the locally agreed syllabus.

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. All feedback letters will be published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half-term.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included: interviews with staff and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of two lessons.

The overall effectiveness of RE was judged to be satisfactory.

Achievement and standards

Achievement in RE is satisfactory.

- Standards are broadly average and pupils make satisfactory progress overall. However, in previous years this has not been even in all areas of the subject. The school recognises that the previous long term plan did not support progression fully in all aspects of the RE curriculum. Helpfully, the introduction of the new agreed syllabus has prompted the development of a new, well structured long term plan.

- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour in the lessons observed were at least satisfactory. In discussion, Year 6 pupils were very enthusiastic about their recent work on Buddhism. They know that Buddhism is a non theistic religion and can describe its eightfold path. They have a basic grasp of how this might influence the choices people make in life. There was less excitement about studying Christianity and this is a challenge for the school.

Quality of teaching and learning in RE

Teaching and learning are satisfactory.

- Lessons are well planned to build learning on pupils' experiences. Teachers' questioning is effectively structured to develop pupils' understanding and follow up questions challenge pupils to extend their thinking. Teachers allow ample time for pupils to consider their answers and respond in complete sentences. On occasion, learning is hindered by teachers' lack of subject knowledge.
- A good variety of activities support learning in RE. Tasks are suitably matched to pupils' abilities with challenging tasks set for the most able.
- Plenaries do not focus with sufficient clarity and brevity on progress towards the learning objectives.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory.

- Sensibly, the school has adopted the medium term planning developed by the local authority to support the implementation of the new agreed syllabus.
- A manageable and coherent system for assessing and recording pupils' attainment and progress has been established recently to align with the new agreed syllabus. Helpfully, this is consistent with the school's practice in other subjects. The coordinator is keeping both the assessment tasks and the process under regular review.
- Although, over a period of time, the school has arranged a suitable range of visits and visitors to enrich learning in RE, it lacks a coherent plan for supporting pupils' learning in this way as they move through the school.

Leadership and management of subject

The quality of leadership and management in the subject is satisfactory.

- The subject leader is committed, well organised and has successfully raised the profile of the subject. She has worked diligently to implement the new agreed syllabus and establish a suitable assessment system. Good use has been made of the support available from the local authority.
- Sound systems are in place to monitor and evaluate progress in introducing the new curriculum. However, next year monitoring will need to focus more sharply on raising standards in the subject.
- The school has a realistic view of provision in this subject and is well placed to improve.

Implementation of the agreed syllabus

- The implementation of the new agreed syllabus is a whole school priority this year. Both time and funding have been allocated to support this. Prior to its introduction in September, training was provided for all staff. The subject leader has suitable plans to review progress on all aspects of implementing the new syllabus at the end of the academic year.

Inclusion

- There are no marked differences between the performance of various groups of pupils in this subject. Where in class support for lower attaining pupils is proactive, well directed and challenging, their progress in lessons is at least as good as that of other pupils.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- to continue to embed the accurate use of assessment levels and the new assessment procedures
- to develop a coherent programme of visits and visitors to enrich pupils' learning
- to improve teachers' subject knowledge.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop RE in the school.

As I explained in my previous letter, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority/SACRE and will be published on Ofsted's website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Mrs J Austin
Her Majesty's Inspector