

22 November 2006

Mrs P Moore
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Moore

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Religious Education

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit with David Moore HMI on 20 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 a Year 2 and a Year 6 lesson.

The overall effectiveness of RE was judged to be good. The provision has some outstanding features.

Achievement and standards

Achievement in RE is good and standards are above average.

- Pupils in Years 5 and 6 have a good grasp of some key religious concepts such as belief, symbolism and the use of symbolic language. For example, Year 6 pupils understand that beliefs have an impact on the choices people make in life and their aspirations. The personal creeds written by Year 6 demonstrate a reflective, mature approach to the moral and spiritual aspects of life they consider most significant.

- Standards in Key Stage 1 are also above average. In the context of a unit on Christmas, Year 2 pupils can explain why a person's viewpoint will affect whether news is considered good or bad. In a highly sophisticated response during the lesson observed, one boy articulated clearly why a photograph of a war memorial might represent bad news for those who died but good news for those now alive who benefit from post war society.
- Pupils' have very well developed literacy skills and these contribute significantly to their learning in RE. For example, Year 6 can understand and compare the biblical texts relating to Christmas competently and begin to grasp the symbolic links between these and Old Testament prophecies. Standards in speaking and listening are high throughout the school, enabling pupils to develop and articulate their ideas clearly. They listen well to one another and to adults.
- Pupils' enjoyment of RE is outstanding. RE makes a significant contribution to pupils' personal development through the well balanced approach to learning about and learning from religion. It forms part of the school's coherent strategy for personal development which includes the SEAL programme, Golden Time, collective worship and personal, social, health and citizenship education.

Quality of teaching and learning in RE

The quality of teaching and learning in RE is outstanding.

- Lessons are very carefully planned to develop pupils' understanding through challenging and exciting activities. Teachers successfully convey an infectious enthusiasm for learning and devise tasks that are both rigorous and fun. A wide range of resources is used such as music, singing, video recording and role plays. Lessons move at a cracking pace and good opportunities are included for assessing pupils' learning. Teachers' questioning is highly effective in identifying misunderstandings and building on ideas.
- Pupils understand what they are learning and how this fits into a broader theme. Older pupils can also explain how they learn best, recognising practical activities including visits, as both helpful and memorable ways of learning. Year 5 pupils know that presenting the story of Rama and Sita to Year 3 pupils was a very effective way of learning about it themselves.

Quality of curriculum

The curriculum for RE is good.

- The curriculum follows the new agreed syllabus: the long term plan effectively balances the study of world faiths and reflects the area in which pupils live. Sensibly, the school is using the local authority's scheme of work as a basis for developing planning that matches the

pupils' learning needs. Helpful links are beginning to be made with skills pupils learn in other subjects such as science.

- Regular assessments linked to the new syllabus have been introduced: their effectiveness is being evaluated at regular intervals. The school's high expectations of pupils are maintained in RE. Recording procedures are straightforward and enable the subject leader to maintain an overview of standards in the subject.
- The curriculum is enriched by a range of visits and visitors which pupils appreciate greatly. As yet, these do not form a coherent, planned element of provision in RE.

Leadership and management of RE

The leadership and management of RE are outstanding.

- You provide outstanding leadership enabling suitable priority to be given to the development of the subject at a time when the implementation of the new agreed syllabus is due. The school's evaluation of its provision in RE is accurate and provides a firm foundation for future improvements.
- The newly appointed subject leader is leading the subject well. She has successfully raised both its profile and the staff's enthusiasm for implementing the new curriculum. Well focused training has contributed to this. The production of comprehensive planning, assessment and resource files is also effective in supporting staff as they begin to deliver the new curriculum.
- Manageable and timely procedures for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the new curriculum and assessment arrangements are in place.

The implementation of the agreed syllabus

- The school has approached the introduction of the agreed syllabus with vigour and enthusiasm. It has made effective use of support from the local authority in drawing up a long term plan which matches pupils' needs and circumstances. Guidelines on medium term plans and assessments are being followed. There are sensible plans to review the impact of these at the end of the year.

Inclusion

- This is a fully inclusive school. Targeted in-class support for learners is effective in enabling all pupils to make good progress. Work is appropriately matched to pupils' prior learning and their needs.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- to improve teachers' subject knowledge
- to develop a coherent plan for visits and visitors that matches the new long term plan
- to implement the planned end of year review, including an evaluation of assessment tasks and recording procedures.

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