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Ms E Butler
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Dear Ms Butler

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Religious Education

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 21 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 good.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards in RE are good.

- From a very low starting point pupils make good progress throughout the school and by Year 6 standards in RE are average. Older pupils reflect with maturity and express profound thoughts about God. For example, this was seen in an outstanding Year 6 lesson when a pupil said, 'Moses' faith in God gave him hope whilst in slavery'.

- Pupils' personal development is outstanding. They are enthusiastic about their RE lessons. They enjoy learning about different religions and say, 'the subject teaches us to challenge racism'. Pupils' spiritual development is promoted exceptionally well. Behaviour in lessons is good.

Quality of teaching and learning in RE

The quality of teaching and learning in RE is good.

- Overall, teaching is good. It ranges from outstanding to satisfactory. The best teaching is characterised by outstanding starter activities which immediately grasp pupils' attention. Pace in outstanding lessons is cracking and effective questioning extends pupils thinking about religion. Interesting role play activities engage pupils in learning and enable them to develop their skills of reflection and expression exceptionally well.
- In satisfactory lessons the pace of teaching drops, pupils' learning slows and opportunities to promote pupils' independence in learning are missed.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is outstanding.

- The RE curriculum is innovative and creative. It promotes excellence and enjoyment in learning. Content from the agreed syllabus is integrated in a thematic curriculum plan. Far from being subsumed, RE takes a lead in the planning of a number of themes. This approach is valued by the pupils. The RE modules focus on developing pupils' skills of reflection and response through interesting and exciting themes. Information and communication technology (ICT) skills are developed well through the RE curriculum. 'Circle Time' is skilfully planned to promote pupils' spiritual development.
- There is an imaginative approach to assessment which raises pupils' achievement. The levels in the agreed syllabus have been refined to produce success criteria to measure the planned learning outcomes for each lesson. These are linked to an assessment for learning programme, which involves pupils in developing strategies to improve their work on a weekly basis.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management in RE are good.

- Effective leadership ensures that RE has a high profile in the school. There is a clear vision, shared by all staff, to make the subject relevant for pupils. The school is successful in realising its vision. Decisive actions, such as the development of a new assessment model, focus on driving up standards. Due to other priorities within the school the subject leader has

not yet had the opportunity to monitor the quality of teaching and learning. This activity is planned for the summer term.

- The school's self-evaluation of its performance in RE is good and it is clear about what needs to be done to improve the subject further. Clear priorities to achieve this are mapped out in a robust subject action plan.

Implementation of the Agreed Syllabus

- The school has made an excellent start in its implementation of the new agreed syllabus. Content from the syllabus has been skilfully woven into the school's remodelled curriculum plan and has a high status position. Creative thinking and decisive action has refined the assessment model in the syllabus to meet the needs of the pupils and raise their achievement.

Inclusion

- Inclusion is a significant strength in this school. Pupils with challenging behaviour associated with their learning difficulties achieve well in RE. Those with speech and language difficulties gain in confidence as they are encouraged to express their views in their RE lessons. Gifted and talented pupils are given opportunities to excel in RE, as evidenced in some high quality ICT work.

As we discussed, there is only one area for improvement:

- to ensure that the small amount of satisfactory teaching in the subject is improved so that it matches the best practice 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

Jeffery Plumb
Additional Inspector