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Dear Mr Phillips

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Religious Education

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 29 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: discussion 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 with outstanding features.

Achievement and standards

Pupils' achievement in RE is good.

- Standards are below average at Key Stage 1 where low standards of literacy and some lack of confidence in self-expression limit the pupils' progress. Standards across Key Stage 2 are average overall but above average in Years 5/6.

- Pupils' achievement is good overall. They make good progress in Key Stage 1. They progress at a modest rate in Years 3 and 4 but make very good and sometimes outstanding progress in Years 5/6.
- RE makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development.

Quality of teaching and learning in RE

The quality of teaching and learning is good.

- The large majority of teachers have good subject knowledge and are confident in those aspects of the subject that they teach. Excellent use is made of support staff.
- Lesson planning, based on the co-ordinator's excellent medium term plans, is very good and is rooted securely on the agreed syllabus.
- Lessons are marked by the variety of teaching styles, excellent relationships and, in the case of one lesson, outstanding challenge.
- Pupils respond very well in lessons and make at least good progress.
- Good use is made of assessment to build on pupils' existing knowledge, understanding and skills.

Quality of curriculum

The curriculum in RE is good with outstanding features.

- RE is planned to a high professional standard throughout the whole school.
- The subject is made interesting for pupils. Carefully structured planning ensures an increase in the challenge of work across the school enabling pupils to make good progress.
- The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' basic skills of literacy and ICT.
- The school provides popular enrichment activities through links with the local community.
- Assessment is well developed through a simple but effective system of recording pupils' levels. Tasks are designed carefully for pupils at different levels so that they can achieve further.

Leadership and management of RE

Leadership and management of RE are outstanding.

- The subject leader, with strong support from senior management, has an infectious enthusiasm which, coupled with systematic planning and attention to raising standards, has created a high level of consistency in teaching and learning across the school.
- Particular strengths in subject management are the thorough and constructive quality assurance of teaching and the prompt and decisive action to remedy any problems.

- Very good links exist with parents and the local community.

The implementation of the agreed syllabus

The progress in implementing the new agreed syllabus is outstanding. The subject leader has a clear, thorough understanding of the rationale and key features of the syllabus and has undertaken a careful self-evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the current provision to identify how the new syllabus can support improvement. The school has a clear, coherent and well-managed strategy in place to implement the syllabus and the process has been incorporated within a clear, well-considered and costed improvement plan. There are also clear plans to evaluate the impact of the process of implementation on pupil achievement and overall provision.

Inclusion

Carefully planned provision and the excellent use of support teachers enables both high and low ability pupils to achieve well.

The area for improvement, which we discussed was:

- to use the information gained through assessment more effectively to judge the progress made by pupils.

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 and SACRE and will be published on Ofsted's website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Barbara Wintersgill
Additional Inspector