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Mrs Lisa Cook
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Cook

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Religious Education (RE)

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 20 November 2006 to look at work in 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 recently published Norfolk Agreed Syllabus for 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. 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 one Key Stage 2 lesson.

The overall effectiveness of RE was judged to be satisfactory.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards in RE are satisfactory.

- In most cases, pupils make satisfactory progress in RE. Their attainment is broadly in line with the expectations set out in the Agreed Syllabus. There is some underachievement in relation to aspects of the Programmes of Study in the Agreed Syllabus, particularly in Attainment Target 2.

- RE contributes to pupils' personal development, especially in increasing their awareness of religious and cultural diversity.

Quality of teaching and learning in RE

The quality of teaching and learning in RE is satisfactory.

- Pupils make progress in developing their knowledge about different religions through sound teaching supported by suitable resources. The emphasis in teaching on acquiring breadth of knowledge about religions tends to detract from how pupils might develop a deeper understanding of religious perspectives and how these relate to spiritual and moral issues. Overall, they enjoy their lessons, are well-motivated towards RE and behave well in class.
- Assessment of pupils' progress in RE is in its early stages. A system of monitoring pupils' work year by year, using exemplar material, is currently in place, but their work is not yet assessed on the basis of clear criteria related to targets and levels. The school is aware of the need for greater rigour in ensuring that pupils' progress is monitored and their work assessed effectively, and a programme of development of this aspect of teaching and learning is currently under consideration.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the RE curriculum is satisfactory.

- The school is working towards the implementation of the 2005 Norfolk Agreed Syllabus. At present the curriculum emphasises strongly the development of knowledge and understanding of religions, but does not provide sufficient opportunities for pupils to explore wider questions about beliefs and values.

Leadership and management of RE

Leadership and management of RE are satisfactory.

- Initiatives to raise standards and improve the quality of learning support the curriculum as a whole, and subject leadership is set to develop through the school's innovative subject leader toolkit. At present, the process of monitoring and evaluating the work of individual teachers is confined to a scrutiny of medium term plans. Further development will be needed to ensure that all pupils are taught a balanced curriculum in RE, reflecting both attainment targets, and that effective structures are in place to raise standards in the subject and to monitor pupils' progress.

Subject issue

- The school is aware of the need to implement the new agreed syllabus but has not included it in its priorities for development. Some steps have already been taken, for example, by mapping current teaching and planning against the new requirements. A more thorough review of planning and assessment will be needed to bring the curriculum more fully into line with the syllabus. The school is aware of the requirement to report to Norfolk SACRE on the level of pupils' attainment in RE at the end of Key Stage 2.

Inclusion

- The general level of support for pupils of different abilities, as seen in observed lesson, is good.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- to work towards greater clarity and balance in planning, in relation to breadth and depth, on the basis of the two attainment targets for RE
- to ensure that there are sufficient time and resources to monitor and support individual teachers in their planning, teaching and assessment of RE
- to incorporate level descriptors into the planning, teaching and assessment of RE to support target setting, raising standards and reporting attainment.

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

Yours sincerely

John Rudge
Additional Inspector