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Mrs C Williamson  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Williamson

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Religious Education

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 17 January 2007 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 and a discussion with the minister from the local Methodist church.

The overall effectiveness of RE was judged to be satisfactory.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards in RE are satisfactory.

- By the end of Year 2 and Year 6 standards are average. This shows that the pupils make satisfactory progress as they move through the school. Year 6 pupils have a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of the world religions they have studied, but their written explanations lack depth.

- Overwhelmingly, pupils have positive attitudes to their RE lessons. Their behaviour is consistently good in lessons. They particularly enjoy the opportunities to participate in role play activities and finding out information using the Internet.

### Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory.

- Relationships between teachers and pupils are good. Consequently pupils are confident to ask questions when they do not understand and this enhances their learning. An interesting range of teaching and learning styles are used to bring the subject alive.
- However, teachers' subject knowledge is not always secure and the planned learning outcomes are not always sufficiently sharp. Pupils' written work is marked with helpful comments which make it clear what they need to do to improve their work. Year 5 and 6 pupils say, 'We would like to have more homework'.

### Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory

- The curriculum is satisfactory overall with some good features. It is enriched by visits. A thematic approach is developing well and, in some modules, RE takes a lead role linking with work in literacy, art and science. For example, following a visit to York Minster, Year 6 pupils wrote some thoughtful poems. Exciting activities are built into curriculum planning to promote pupils' spiritual development and to raise their awareness of cultural diversity. 'Circle Time' is skilfully planned to support the RE programme.
- There is no baseline assessment in place and pupils' progress in the subject is not tracked. The school is trialling an assessment system. However, it is struggling to fit the assessment system to the content of the agreed syllabus scheme of work.

### Leadership and management

Leadership and management in RE are satisfactory

- You have taken the decision to deploy a quality higher learning teaching assistant (HLTA) to deliver RE to certain classes. This works reasonably well, but training in subject knowledge is required to improve this model of delivery.
- Co-ordination of the subject is satisfactory, but self evaluation of strengths and weaknesses in RE is at an early stage of development. However, the profile of the subject is secure and the capacity to improve is good.

Monitoring of teaching and learning is satisfactory, but not always sufficiently sharp in identifying focussed areas for improvement.

### Implementation of the Agreed Syllabus

- The school has made a steady start in its implementation of the new agreed syllabus. Modifications to schemes of work have proved to be a seamless transition from the old to the new. The subject has a good status in the school. Creative thinking has gone into developing an assessment model based on the syllabus to meet the needs of pupils and raise their achievement, but the school recognises it has encountered difficulties and now plans to review its system.

### Inclusion

- Inclusion is a significant strength in this school. The needs of pupils with learning difficulties/disabilities are meticulously mapped. Teachers plan activities in RE lessons to meet their needs. Opportunities are planned to enable more able pupils to think critically. Boys do as well as girls in the subject. The cultural backgrounds of the few minority ethnic pupils are valued.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- raising achievement and standards throughout the school by improving the quality of teaching
- providing subject knowledge training for those teaching RE
- developing a baseline assessment
- reviewing the assessment processes in place for RE and bringing them together into a manageable system to track pupils progress as they move through the school
- developing the self-evaluation skills of the subject leader.

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

Jeffery Plumb  
Additional Inspector