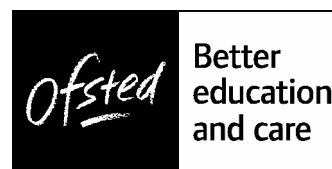


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Ms D Bland
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Dear Ms Bland

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Religious Education

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 24 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 yourself, the subject leader for RE and a group of Year 6 pupils; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work; observation of lessons in Years 2 and 6.

The overall effectiveness of RE was judged to be satisfactory.

Achievement and standards

Pupils achievement in RE is satisfactory overall.

- Overall, pupils reach the standards expected for their age. Their speaking and listening skills are well developed. Pupils use well structured sentences both to frame questions to which they would like answers, and to reply to adults. They enjoy getting to grips with new, specialised terminology. For instance, Year 2 pupils were keen to use the word

'epiphany' in the right context, while Year 6 pupils enjoyed using the word 'atheist' accurately and discovering the meaning of word 'agnostic'. Higher attaining pupils are able to make some relevant links between the various aspects of religions they have studied.

- In the main, pupils attitudes to the subject are positive. Year 6 pupils recognise the contribution the subject makes to preparing them for life. They appreciate the opportunities they have to learn about the main world faiths and to understand the importance of respecting the beliefs people hold. The recent introduction of the SEAL programme is complementing and strengthening work in RE to foster dispositions such as open-mindedness, self-awareness and perseverance.

Quality of teaching and learning of RE

The quality of teaching and learning is good.

- Lesson planning builds well on pupils' prior learning and sets clear, realistic outcomes for lessons. Pupils know what they are aiming to achieve and can review their progress effectively at the end of lessons.
- Teaching activities are varied and motivating, making pupils eager to learn and stimulating their enthusiasm for enquiry. For instance, in a Year 6 lesson, carefully juxtaposed sets of photographs captured pupils' interest and helped them categorise the events pictured. Tasks enable them to develop and practise skills such as paired and team work. Effective use is made of a range of resources including interactive whiteboards, pictures, and visitors, to support learning.
- Regular marking helps pupils know what they have to do to improve. It often includes further questions to challenge their thinking and pupils respond thoughtfully when this is the case.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory.

- The choice of faiths studied in depth is well considered in the light of pupils' backgrounds and experiences. Learning activities provide a suitable range of experiences for pupils, such as opportunities for reflection when studying Buddhism. The school's increasing focus on making links across the curriculum includes RE, but this has not always resulted in work of sufficient quality or accuracy. Visits by speakers from several faiths enhance the curriculum.
- The system for assessing and tracking pupils' progress is underdeveloped. While some of the recommended assessment tasks are used at the end of units of study, regular assessment and levelling of pupils' work is restricted to the end Key Stages 1 and 2.

Leadership and management of RE

The leadership and management of RE is satisfactory.

- The school has made the implementation of the new agreed syllabus a priority this year and prepared an outline action plan to effect this. However, a slow start has been made. A review of the long term plan has yet to take place so the previous schemes of work and assessment arrangements remain in use.
- Arrangements for monitoring and evaluating the subject are limited. Although the coordinator monitors provision informally, there are no mechanisms in place for regular checks and evaluations of the quality of provision.

Implementation of the agreed syllabus

- The school has yet to implement the new agreed syllabus.

Inclusion

- The school's commitment to inclusion is supported by good practice demonstrated by the way in which all pupils are fully included in RE lessons. The school allocates suitable levels of support to classes to meet the additional needs of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The good support pupils receive, and the appropriate differentiation of learning tasks, enables all to make progress at a similar rate to their peers.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- implementing the new agreed syllabus
- establishing a system for assessing and tracking pupils' standards and progress
- ensuring that mechanisms are in place for the regular monitoring and evaluation of the quality of the provision in RE.

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