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Mr I McCann
Headteacher
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Dear Mr McCann

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Religious Education

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 1 February 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 RE subject leader and a group of Year 5 pupils; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work; and observation of lessons in Years 1/2 and 5.

The overall effectiveness of RE was judged to be satisfactory.

Achievement and standards

Achievement is satisfactory.

- Overall, pupils make satisfactory progress to reach the standards expected for their age. For instance, in their work on Hanukkah, Year 2 pupils can make simple comparisons between the story of the victory of the Maccabees and the nativity.
- They have an appropriate understanding of the idea of a miracle and use technical vocabulary such as 'menorah' accurately. Year 5 pupils understand that Muslims look to the Qur'an for guidance and can make helpful connections between this and their own personal sources of guidance.
- Pupils approach learning in RE with positive attitudes, behave well in lessons and respond promptly to instructions. Pupils take turns effectively with their talk partners. RE makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development through a balanced approach to 'learning about' and 'learning from' religion. They recognise and value the links between aspects of RE, circle time and the SEAL programme and can explain the contribution RE makes to preparing them for the next stage of their education and life in the wider community.

Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning in RE is good.

- Lessons are well planned with opportunities at the outset to consolidate previous learning and identify next steps. Pupils know what lessons are about because learning objectives describe in simple terms what they will know, understand or be able to do by the end of the session.
- A good range of activities build learning effectively, with appropriate opportunities to consolidate progress through, for example, focused talking with partners.
- Lessons are well managed and proceed at a brisk pace with clear time targets. Interactive whiteboards are used to good effect to extend the range of resources available to stimulate pupils' interest and further their learning.
- Marking is thorough, identifies what pupils can do to improve and frequently poses challenging questions for consideration.

Quality of curriculum

The curriculum is satisfactory.

- The school meets the statutory requirements of the agreed syllabus and allocates the recommended time for RE to all age groups, an issue identified at the time of the previous inspection. The choice of faiths studied provides a suitable breadth of experience and is well matched to local circumstances. However, opportunities for pupils to extend their

understanding through additional activities such as visits are limited. Pupils appreciate the various visitors who enrich their understanding of Christianity.

- The system for assessing attainment and tracking progress in RE is well-considered and manageable. There are sensible plans to evaluate the effectiveness of newly introduced assessment tasks. In addition, a helpful trial is underway to identify an efficient recording system that quickly allows teachers to see what pupils know, understand and can do.

Leadership and management of RE

The leadership and management of RE are good.

- The subject leader is leading the implementation of the new agreed syllabus well. A realistic action plan is in place and progress with this is up to date. Helpfully, developments in RE are closely linked to the school's overarching priorities. Effective use is being made of local authority guidance and materials, with sensible plans to evaluate how well these meet the needs of pupils and the school.
- The school is currently introducing new procedures for monitoring all areas of its provision, including RE. At present, systems in RE are informal but the school has a largely accurate view of the subject's position. This is based, in part, on a good analysis of standards by the subject leader. A clear focus on raising attainment is demonstrated by the focused guidance provided for teachers on how to improve the performance of individual pupils, particularly those working at below and above the expected level.

Implementation of the agreed syllabus

- The school has made good progress in implementing the new agreed syllabus. A revised RE policy reflecting changes to the curriculum has been approved by the governing body. Suitability of resources has been reviewed.

Inclusion

- All pupils are included in RE lessons. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress at a similar rate to their peers. They receive appropriate levels of challenge and help from support staff. Tasks are differentiated carefully to meet pupils' needs so that the highest attainers are challenged in their thinking.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- developing the portfolio of pupils' work to include levelled examples of assessment tasks
- ensuring, in line with whole school developments, that suitable mechanisms are in place to monitor and evaluate the quality of provision in RE
- extending the range of visits and visitors to enrich pupils' learning experiences.

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