

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404045
F 020 7421 6855
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



14 June 2007

Mr R Barr
Headteacher
Brookfield Community School
Chatsworth Road
Chesterfield
Derbyshire
S40 3NS

Dear Mr Barr

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Religious Education

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff and students, during my visit on 12 and 13 June 2007 to look at work in religious education (RE).

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of RE the visit had a particular focus on the subject's contribution to the promotion of community cohesion.

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 students, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work and observations of three lessons.

The overall effectiveness of RE was judged to be satisfactory.

Achievement and standards

Students' achievement in RE is satisfactory.

- Standards at the end of Key Stage 3 are broadly in line with the agreed syllabus expectations. By the end of Year 9, students use their knowledge and understanding to explain the main beliefs of religions studied and what it means to belong to a faith community. They can clearly explain the experience of inspirational people and relate it to their own lives. Their responses to questions of meaning and purpose are usually well considered. The progress of the great majority of

students is satisfactory. However, students' ability to explain reasons for diversity between and within religions is underdeveloped.

- A small number of students take the GCSE full course option in Years 10 and 11. Over recent years, the results have been above national figures for A*-C grades. These students make good progress.
- Students who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities progress as well as their peers. Teachers understand their specific needs well and provide suitable support.
- The contribution of RE to students' personal development is good. Students value the opportunities presented to discuss social, moral and cultural issues and these help them to grow into mature young people. They feel that it is important to understand religious and cultural diversity and RE makes a good impact in this regard.
- Students have positive attitudes to learning and their behaviour in lessons is good.

Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning in RE is satisfactory overall with some elements that are good.

- Teachers form good relationships with students which help to engage and motivate them. Teaching is planned well and expert subject knowledge is used effectively to encourage students to consolidate and progress in their learning. Students' capacity to respond to questions of meaning and purpose is good. This is a marked improvement since the last inspection.
- There is a satisfactory range of teaching and learning strategies, including the use of discussion and written work. Lessons have a clear structure, and tasks are usually stimulating. However, students do not move into group and individual tasks quickly enough. There are insufficient opportunities for more able students to undertake challenging work and this impedes their progress. Resources, including texts and videos, are used well but information and communication technology is underused to encourage more creative and independent study.
- Assessment procedures are satisfactory. There are suitable assessment tasks which provide reliable information about students' attainment in relation to the agreed syllabus expectations. The use of peer and self-assessment and teachers' own ongoing assessments are insufficiently developed to chart how well pupils progress throughout Key Stage 3. GCSE work is marked in detail, clearly showing how students can improve and this level of detail is occasionally evident in Years 7 to 9. Strategies to further improve on this are being considered in the context of a subject which is mostly taught by a single teacher.

Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum in RE is satisfactory.

- The curriculum in Years 7 to 9 is matched closely to the Derbyshire agreed syllabus requirements. It makes an effective contribution to students' thinking and learning skills.
- Planning is sufficiently detailed and takes good account of 'learning about' and 'learning from' religion. Knowledge and understanding are generally built effectively upon prior learning to ensure students' progress, but more able students' progress is less well planned for and secured.
- The provision in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form does not fulfil the agreed syllabus requirements fully for those students who do not follow an accredited course.

Leadership and management of RE

Leadership and management of RE are satisfactory.

- The head of department is enthusiastic, has very good subject knowledge and is committed to improvement. Unsatisfactory elements reported in the last inspection have largely been addressed well, particularly in relation to assessing students' attainment. Self-evaluation is mostly accurate in identifying strengths and weaknesses, and the right priorities for further improvement have been identified.
- Procedures for checking students' progress are developing but need to be strengthened to provide robust accountability.

The contribution of RE to the promotion of community cohesion

RE makes a positive contribution to the promotion of community cohesion. Students readily explore issues related to religious and cultural diversity and display obvious respect for differences they encounter in a spirit of genuine enquiry. They respond well to opportunities to express their own views and feel their opinions are valued. There is some enrichment of the curriculum through fieldwork but this does not extend beyond visits to local churches.

Inclusion

The provision for inclusion is satisfactory. The department is committed to providing equality of access and helping students to achieve and enjoy in the subject. More able students are not always extended sufficiently. Senior leaders recognise the need to improve the provision for all students in Years 10 and 11.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring curricular provision takes full account of the agreed syllabus requirements
- improving the rate of progress of the more able students.

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

Dilip Kadodwala
Her Majesty's Inspector