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Mr S King  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr King

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Religious Education

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 24 May 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 pupils, a scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of three lessons.

The overall effectiveness of RE was judged to be satisfactory.

Achievement and standards

Pupils' achievement in RE is satisfactory.

- Pupils make satisfactory progress to reach the standards expected for their age by the end of each key stage.
- Pupils in Year 2 make simple comparisons between features of religion, for example, in discussing the story of The Lost Sheep and the Buddhist story of Angulimala the Robber whilst pupils in Years 3 and 4 are able to make links between beliefs using such stories.
- Pupils in the Foundation Stage show respect for religious artefacts; they understood why they must not touch the Torah. In Year 1 pupils

are able to use correct vocabulary to describe the artefacts and explain simply how they are used. Some pupils understood that the Torah contains lots of instructions or rules about how Jewish people should live.

- Pupils in Year 6 have an appropriate understanding of the specific religions they study. For example, they are able to raise simple questions about the beliefs and practices involved in the Islamic faith. They are less secure in describing the impact of belonging to a religion.
- Pupils approach RE with very positive attitudes; they behave very well in lessons. They respond very well in discussions. They work co-operatively and listen well to each others' point of view. RE makes a good contribution to the pupils' personal development.

### Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning in RE is satisfactory with some good features.

- Relationships are strong and pupils work harmoniously with sustained concentration. Well-planned lessons usually build upon the pupils' previous learning. The best planning identifies any misconceptions that the pupils may have and identifies good strategies to overcome them.
- Most pupils know what they are going to learn because the teachers explain clearly what they are going to do and what they will be able to understand by the end of the lesson. The best lessons make use of a mini-plenary to assess how well pupils are doing.
- The best lessons make effective use of a range of strategies to consolidate and, sometimes, extend learning. Teachers make appropriate use of ICT to engage pupils' interest.
- Information from end of unit assessments of pupils' work is not used routinely to ensure that all pupils are sufficiently challenged in the next unit. Marking is regular but does not enable pupils to know how to improve their work and develop their skills.

### Quality of curriculum

The curriculum in RE is satisfactory.

- The school meets the statutory requirements of the agreed syllabus. The choice of faiths studied provides a suitable breadth of experience. While pupils appreciate the various visits that deepen their understanding of Christianity, the opportunities for pupils to extend their understanding through such additional activities are less well developed.
- A suitable range of activities is planned but too often worksheets are used to record outcomes for pupils and this does not always extend to the most able.
- Appropriate systems are in place to assess pupils' attainment and progress. There are assessment tasks at the end of each unit to assess what the pupils have understood but the outcomes are not used to plan the next unit of work.

- There are sensible plans in place to make cross-curricular links, for example, with English.

## Leadership and Management

The leadership and management of RE are satisfactory.

- You have taken on the role as subject co-ordinator but have only been in post for about six weeks. You are making appropriate use of the local authority to provide support for RE.
- An audit of current provision has been completed and there are plans to make changes in the teaching of the subject from next September.
- You have a clear grasp of the strengths and areas for development in the subject.

## Community Cohesion

Pupils show a keen interest in learning about religion and have an understanding of other groups, faiths and traditions. They are given appropriate opportunities to relate their study of religion to their own experience and the local community through, for example, visits by local church groups that come into school to run workshops and assemblies. Pupils regularly contribute work to the local Parish magazine. Pupils have studied festivals around the world; they have looked at how Christmas is celebrated by different Christian traditions and have put forward this as part of a bid to gain international school status. There is scope to extend the way in which pupils have the opportunity to develop a deeper understanding of diversity outside their immediate community through visits to a wider range of religious and faith groups.

## Inclusion

Pupils with learning difficulties progress well because they are well supported in class. Tasks are not always differentiated enough to challenge the higher attaining pupils.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- making more effective use of the level descriptors and end of unit assessments to plan work that extends prior knowledge and skills, especially those of the more able pupils
- increasing the opportunities for pupils to engage with visits to, and visitors from, a wider variety of faith groups.

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

Jacqueline K Wordsworth  
Her Majesty's Inspector