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Mrs D Bidgood
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Dear Mrs Bidgood

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Religious Education

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 11 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 pupils, a scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of two lessons.

The overall effectiveness of RE was judged to be satisfactory.

Achievement and standards

Pupils' achievement in RE is satisfactory.

- Pupils make satisfactory gains in their understanding of religion as they progress through the school and reach average standards.
- Pupils in the Foundation Stage have a sense of self with some pupils talking about their local community. They understand what a church is used for and can use simple words to describe its significance for some people.

- By the end of Key Stage 1 pupils are able to identify a range of religious practices knowing that some are common to more than one religion. They understand that there are different places of worship and can give simple explanations of how each building is used.
- By the end of Key Stage 2 they are able to describe the key beliefs and teachings of specific religions, for example Buddhism, and make appropriate connections with features of Christianity, as shown in their knowledge and understanding of Buddhist and Christian wedding ceremonies.
- Attitudes towards the subject are positive; pupils enjoy RE and welcome opportunities to build confidence in a subject they value because 'there are no right or wrong answers'. They respond 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.

- Classroom management is good. Relationships are warm and trusting, pupils work harmoniously with sustained concentration.
- Soundly planned lessons usually build upon the pupils' previous learning. The best lessons make effective use of a range of strategies to consolidate and extend learning.
- Teachers manage class discussion well, encouraging pupils to talk about their ideas affording them the opportunity to assess their understanding. Marking is a weakness; it is irregular and does not enable pupils to understand 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. Lessons are planned to interest the wide range of ages within each class.
- An appropriate range of activities is planned but too often worksheets are used to record outcomes for pupils and this does not always extend the most able.
- The curriculum is enriched through visits in the immediate locality and by visiting speakers.
- 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.

- The subject co-ordinator is very enthusiastic about the development of RE throughout the school. Although formal monitoring of RE is not yet fully embedded, there is a keen awareness of what needs to be done to raise standards. An action plan is in place and information files to support teachers with planning are helpful.
- While good links with the local authority have provided the school with valuable advice and support about assessing and tracking pupils' progress, the systems are at an early stage of development. Currently pupils have to wait until the end of the year to find out about how they are doing in RE.

Community Cohesion

RE makes a positive contribution to the promotion of community cohesion. Pupils show a keen interest in learning about religion and understand about a diversity of 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 and visits. Pupils talked with enthusiasm about the recent visit from a Buddhist monk and were eager to show what they had learned. The school has developed a portfolio of evidence to demonstrate how it works to promote community cohesion through all subjects.

Inclusion

There is a strong focus on inclusion in the school and all pupils take advantage of what the RE curriculum can offer. Teaching assistants support their pupils well and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress as a result. Tasks are not always differentiated enough to challenge the higher attaining pupils.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- making more use of the level descriptors to plan work that extends prior knowledge and skills, especially for the more able pupils
- developing more structured assessments to track pupils' progress more effectively
- formalising the arrangements for monitoring the quality of 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 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