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Mr J Willetts  
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Dear Mr Willetts

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Religious Education

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit with Anne Pitt HMI on 24 September 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 governors, staff and pupils, a scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of four lessons.

The overall effectiveness of RE was judged to be satisfactory.

Achievement and standards

Pupils' achievement in RE is satisfactory.

- Pupils are generally working at the expected levels as outlined in the Sandwell agreed syllabus. Work seen in books shows that pupils have many opportunities to consider beliefs, practices, ways of life and sense of belonging in the religions studied. They have less opportunity for examining matters relating to meaning and purpose.
- Pupils show very positive attitudes to the subject. They find RE interesting and say that it helps them to understand how other people live and what they believe. This enables them to show respect for

other people's beliefs. The contribution of RE to supporting to pupils' personal development is excellent.

### Quality of teaching and learning

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

- Teaching is usually well informed and activities are generally well conceived. Pupils participate and behave well in lessons because of the good relationships they have with their teachers. Pupils value the many opportunities to express their opinions and know that their teachers and fellow pupils listen to and respect their views. Effective use is made of learning support assistants. Teaching strategies do not always ensure that pupils consolidate their learning before moving on as there is sometimes a tendency to try to cover too much in lessons.
- Pupils are encouraged to express their responses, thoughts and feelings through free writing especially in Key Stage 2. There is scope to develop more opportunities to build independent writing into Key Stage 1 where work is mainly worksheet based.

### Quality of curriculum

The curriculum in RE is satisfactory.

- The curriculum is thoughtful. The choice of religions studied reflects the nature of the local community. There is a good balance of work between the two attainment targets with appropriate attention paid to the development of pupils' knowledge and understanding of religion using a thematic approach. Pupils are encouraged to engage with RE and reflect on their own lives by examining religion and the individual, the family, community and the wider world. The thematic approach to RE adopted by the school does not always secure effective continuity in the pupils' learning.
- There is a limited range of activities to enrich the curriculum, insufficient use is made of fieldwork. However, the school has made effective links with personal, social and health education (PSHE) within school and utilised staff expertise well.
- The arrangements for assessment in RE are satisfactory and developing. The recently introduced 'I can' statements are a positive step in enabling teachers to refine their planning in the light of on-going assessment.

### Leadership and Management

The leadership and management of RE are satisfactory.

- The RE co-ordinator is keen and has good subject knowledge. A clear policy and a new scheme of work are in place. A start has been made on self evaluation, so that strengths and weaknesses have been clearly identified resulting in a subject action plan.
- Monitoring arrangements are presently informal with some scrutiny of teachers' planning. The teaching of RE is not systematically evaluated

but elements have been looked at during the monitoring of other areas. There are plans to monitor the implementation of the newly introduced assessment arrangements.

### Community Cohesion

RE lessons enable pupils to develop attitudes of tolerance and respect for those who see the world differently to themselves. There are fewer opportunities for pupils to conduct field work and experience the rich diversity of religion in the local area. This forms part of the school's action plan and provides a good basis to formalise some of the good work that takes place in the PSHE curriculum.

### Inclusion

All pupils are included in RE lessons; no pupils are withdrawn because lessons are structured so that all can participate no matter what their faith group. Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities make similar progress to that of their peers. They receive good support from learning support assistants. All pupils are supported and encouraged to give their opinions and to value the beliefs and practices of others.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- completing the implementation of the assessment arrangements for RE
- formalising the mechanisms for monitoring the effectiveness of the subject
- extending the use made of field work 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