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Mr Tim Clark
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Dear Mr Clark

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Religious Education (RE)

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 15 and 16 October 2007 to look at work in 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 way the subject contributes 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, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of three lessons.

The overall effectiveness of RE was judged to be good with some outstanding features.

Achievement and standards

Pupils' achievement in RE is good with some outstanding features.

- Standards at the end of Key Stage 3 are high in relation to the expectations of the Lincolnshire agreed syllabus. The majority of pupils are able to give informed accounts of religions and can express their own insights confidently. The most able pupils can critically evaluate religious questions and form their own balanced viewpoints.
- By the end of Year 11, standards are consistently and exceptionally high and pupils make at least good progress. The proportion of pupils who attain the top grades at GCSE is significantly higher than those

attained nationally. High standards are maintained in the sixth form, as reflected in public examination results.

- The contribution of RE to pupils' personal development is very good. It makes a significant impact on pupils' lives. Pupils are very aware of the importance of appreciating religious and cultural diversity in contemporary Britain. They show respect for diversity and are able to talk confidently about their own views. Pupils behave extremely well in lessons and they have very positive attitudes to RE.

Quality of teaching and learning of RE

The quality of teaching and learning in RE is good.

- Specialist teachers have good subject knowledge which they use skilfully to probe pupils' knowledge, thereby deepening pupils' understanding of religion.
- Teachers form very good relationships with pupils which help to engage and motivate them. Challenging teaching enables pupils to make at least good progress.
- Teaching is well planned, using detailed schemes of work, which have been updated to take account of the recently revised Lincolnshire agreed syllabus. Lessons, typically, have a good range of activities which are engaging. Pupils particularly like discussions and debates which help to sharpen up their thinking and communication skills. Increasingly, the department is matching the teaching to the different needs of pupils, with moderate success. This is rightly identified as a continuing priority to improve the quality of teaching and learning further.
- Assessment is good overall. Pupils have a clear understanding of assessment criteria to show how well they are attaining. Teachers' marking and verbal feedback enables pupils to know how to improve their work. The tracking of pupils' progress enables teachers to identify underachievement and take effective action.
- The use of self and peer assessment is satisfactory. Even so the potential for the use of these forms of assessment is not yet fully utilised as they are not yet regular features of teaching and learning.

Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum in RE is good.

- The schemes of work take good account of the Lincolnshire agreed syllabus at Key Stage 3. The provision of accredited courses at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form is very good. The options are well matched to pupils' needs and interests. The introduction to the philosophy of religion module in Year 9 is a particular strength because it ensures that there is progression and challenge in pupils' learning. It makes a good contribution to the development of pupils' thinking and evaluative skills.
- There is some good enrichment of the curriculum through visits to places of worship and visiting speakers to the school. The department

recognises that more of this enrichment could be programmed to enhance pupils' learning.

Leadership and management of RE

Leadership and management are good.

- The head of department has suitable and realistic expectations for pupils' academic achievement and their personal development and well-being. These expectations are shared by staff who work well as a team. Good support is provided to enable new and non-specialist staff to teach effectively.
- Careful and wide ranging monitoring, including the canvassing of pupils' views, results in accurate self-evaluation and the identification of the right priorities for further improvement.
- Good use is made of attainment data and it is recognised that the identification and implementation of on-going assessment in teachers' planning will provide further robust information on the rate of pupils' progress.
- The department is well organised and resources are used carefully.

The promotion of community cohesion

RE makes a positive contribution to the promotion of community cohesion. Pupils demonstrate a lively interest in exploring issues related to diversity in religion and have good awareness and understanding about this diversity. They have good opportunities to express their own views about the role of religion in the modern world and feel that their opinions are valued. Although pupils have very positive attitudes to diversity, their interaction with people from different religious and ethnic backgrounds is limited. The department is already considering how this could be improved through, for example, developing links with different schools within the wider locality.

Inclusion

The provision for inclusion is good. All pupils are encouraged to participate in lessons and pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress at a similar rate to their peers.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- increasing the use of self and peer assessment further so that pupils are more engaged in the process of reviewing their progress, and achievement is tracked more routinely and helps to inform teachers' planning.

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 the Ofsted website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Dilip Kadodwala
Her Majesty's Inspector