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04 December 2007

Miss E Pitchford  
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Dear Miss Pitchford

### Ofsted survey inspection programme – Religious Education

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 03 December 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 good.

### Achievement and standards

Pupils' achievement in RE is good.

- Standards across the school are in line those outlined in the Cheshire agreed syllabus. The attainment of the pupils on entry in RE is below average and they make good progress throughout the school.
- Pupils in the Foundation Stage are beginning to learn about religion by engaging with religious artefacts. They show appropriate respect, appreciating that certain items are very special. Pupils are adept at recalling the purpose and use of each artefact. They are able, for example, to explain in simple terms the significance of the Menorah in the Jewish festival of Hanukkah, relating the artefact to items that are

precious in their own lives. They respond well to stories from other religious traditions and can ask and answer simple questions about religion. They can reflect on their own feelings and experiences and explore these through music, art and drama.

- At the end of Key Stage 1, pupils are able to identify some religious practices and understand that these are characteristic of more than one religion. For example, pupils understand that prayer is an element of more than one faith. Pupils recognise key features of the religions they study; they can, for example, explain why the Bible is important to Christians.
- Pupils in Key Stage 2 are beginning to connect learning in RE with a variety of forms of expression, such as music, art and drama. Older pupils are able to make comparisons between the beliefs and ideas of some religions and show how these beliefs are important in people's lives. However, pupils are given insufficient opportunities to reach the higher levels of interpretation required to describe the impact of beliefs on individuals or communities. For example, pupils are less adept in explaining how religious groups within the same tradition express their understanding of faith in a variety of different ways
- RE supports pupils' personal development effectively. It contributes exceptionally well to their spiritual, social, moral and cultural development. Pupils are given time in lessons to reflect on their feelings and thoughts. Pupils show positive attitudes to the subject. They find RE interesting and report that RE helps them to understand other people's cultures and beliefs.

### Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning in RE is good.

- The wide range of teaching techniques enables pupils to respond well in lessons through discussion, art and drama. Interactive whiteboards are used well to stimulate pupils' interest and enhance their learning.
- Relationships in all classes are excellent and pupils behave very well. Pupils know the purpose of lessons because the learning objectives are shared. However, occasionally the tasks set do not match well enough with the purpose of the learning and this restricts the progress that some pupils make. The most able pupils are not always being sufficiently supported or challenged to attain at the highest level.
- Assessment opportunities are developing. The recently introduced arrangements are a positive step in enabling teachers to understand the level at which the pupils are performing. However this information is not currently used to refine planning in the light of on-going assessment.

### Quality of curriculum

The quality of curriculum in RE is good.

- The curriculum meets the requirements of the agreed syllabus. Long and medium term plans clearly identify both attainment targets. Good

attention is paid to the systematic development of pupils' knowledge and understanding of religions. However, there is scope to identify the prior and subsequent learning for each topic studied.

- There is a good range of activities to enrich the curriculum, through theme days and the celebration of festivals. The school participates in a residential project exploring the rights of children across the world, engaging in multi-faith and cultural activities. However, insufficient use is made of fieldwork to enable pupils to gain first hand experience of the religions studied.
- Good cross-curricular links are used to encourage pupils to express their responses, thoughts and feelings through art, dance and drama, especially in Key Stage 2. There are good opportunities provided for independent writing in RE.
- The use of levels in both planning and assessment is an area for further development.

## Leadership and Management

The leadership and management of RE are good.

- The recently appointed, RE co-ordinator is keen and has good subject knowledge. A clear policy and a new scheme of work are in place.
- The co-ordinator has plans to work alongside colleagues to increase their subject knowledge. Effective monitoring of teaching and learning in RE takes place on a three year cycle.
- A useful subject evaluation was produced to support the preparation for this visit with an accurate evaluation of the subject's current position within the school. Resources are well organised and wide ranging.

## Community Cohesion

RE makes a helpful contribution to the promotion of community cohesion; the teaching encourages respect for diversity and the development of pupils' confidence to ask questions about religion. The school's participation in various projects such as the 'art education in a multi- cultural society' (AEMS), as part of the RE curriculum also extends pupils' experience of the multicultural nature of British society.

## Inclusion

All pupils are included in RE lessons; no pupils are withdrawn from RE and lessons are structured so that all can participate no matter what their faith group or ability level. Displays celebrate the work of all children and reflect positive images of diversity. The school's imaginative approaches to teaching and learning engages boys and girls equally well. Pupils requiring additional support are helped to make good progress.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- making better use of assessment information in order to match work to pupils' needs more effectively
- developing the use made of levels in both planning and assessment.

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