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Mr P Teague
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Teague

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Religious Education (RE)

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 6 and 7 December 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.

Achievement and standards

Pupils' achievement in RE is good.

- Standards at the end of Year 8 are at least in line with the expectations of the Bedfordshire agreed syllabus. Some pupils attain higher levels. Overall, pupils make good progress from their starting points on entry to the school. Pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of key features of the major world religions and develop enquiring minds when exploring religious issues. Pupils' responses to the questions and challenges posed by religion are often insightful and contribute effectively to the development of their thinking skills.
- The contribution of RE to pupils' personal development is good. It makes a noticeable impact on pupils' spiritual and moral development.

Pupils are very aware of the importance of appreciating religious and cultural diversity in Britain. They show respect for diversity and are able to talk confidently about their own views. Pupils behave 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.

- Teachers make good use of their secure subject knowledge to enable pupils to develop their knowledge and understanding. Good relationships with pupils help to engage and motivate them.
- Teaching is well planned, using detailed schemes of work, which have been updated to take account of the recently revised Bedfordshire agreed syllabus. Lessons, typically, incorporate a good range of activities and resources to enliven learning.
- Assessment is satisfactory. Pupils have a clear understanding of assessment criteria to show how well they are attaining. Target setting is at an early stage of development. Marking and verbal feedback enable pupils to know how to improve their work. Pupils' progress is tracked using assessment information obtained from two formal tasks in each year group.
- The use of on-going assessment information to provide greater challenge, particularly for the more able, is underdeveloped. The use of self and peer assessment is developing and valued by the pupils. The potential for the use of these forms of assessment is not yet fully utilised, particularly for the older pupils.

Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum in RE is good.

- The schemes of work take good account of the Bedfordshire agreed syllabus. Units of work make good use of the agreed syllabus guidance, as well as being flexible enough to meet the needs of pupils. Individual lesson plans are detailed, informed well by the schemes of work.
- There is some good enrichment of the curriculum through visits to places of worship and visiting speakers to the school.

Leadership and management of RE

Leadership and management are good.

- The subject leader is passionate about the subject and her enthusiasm is shared by the pupils. There is a strong commitment to remain updated by using professional development opportunities effectively. Subject self-evaluation is accurate and identifies the right priorities for further improvement.
- This single person department is organised well and resources are used carefully. The department also makes a valuable contribution to the school's overall ethos, resulting in pupils' good personal development.

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. Pupils have good opportunities to express their own views about the role of religion in the modern world and feel that their opinions are valued.

Inclusion

The provision for inclusion is good. All pupils are encouraged to participate in lessons through a variety of means, thereby ensuring that barriers to learning are removed. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress at a similar rate to their peers.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- developing the use of assessment to raise standards further, particularly for the more able pupils.

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