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Mrs H Storey  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Storey

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Religious Education (RE)

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 22 and 23 January 2008 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 five part lessons.

The overall effectiveness of RE was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

Pupils' achievement in RE is good.

- Full course GCSE results are above national averages and pupils make good progress. There was a slight dip in the proportion of pupils who attained A\*-C grades in 2007, but the longer term trend is consistently above the national average. There are good strategies in place to ensure that the positive trend continues.
- At Key Stage 3, pupils attain above average standards and they make good progress. The majority of pupils are able to give informed accounts of religions studied and, when provided opportunities, can

express their own insights confidently. The most able pupils can compare, contrast and evaluate religious and non-religious perspectives. Although pupils acquire good knowledge and understanding, opportunities for pupils to reflect on beliefs studied are generally limited to verbal discussions.

- The contribution of RE to pupils' personal development is good. It makes a valuable contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural development. Pupils are keen to understand and appreciate religious and cultural diversity in contemporary Britain. They show respect for diversity, including that found in the school community, and are able to talk very confidently about their own views.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and the great majority have positive attitudes to RE.

### Quality of teaching and learning of RE

The quality of teaching and learning in RE is good.

- Teachers use specialist subject knowledge effectively and lessons are planned well. A very positive ethos for learning is established in lessons and relationships with pupils are positive.
- There is a good variety of tasks and activities which engage and motivate the pupils. Pupils particularly enjoy debating and thinking about issues which require higher order skills of evaluation and interpretation. Learning proceeds at a good pace and homework is used well to enhance learning.
- Assessment is good overall. Regular assessment tasks provide teachers with suitable information and pupils' progress is tracked using a school wide system. Pupils receive detailed feedback on the outcomes of the assessed tasks, particularly in Years 10 and 11, so that pupils have a clear idea about what they need to do to attain higher grades. Teacher assessments at Key Stage 3 use the National Framework level descriptors. Although these are used uniformly across the classes and teachers, the department is not yet able to fully demonstrate that the levels are moderated to ensure consistency of judgements, especially at the higher levels.

### Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum in RE is good.

- The schemes of work take good account of the Sheffield agreed syllabus which was last revised in 2004. The subject leader has worked hard to devise a curriculum that matches the pupils' needs and interests. Plans to enhance the curriculum further are advanced, with a view to implementing them from September 2008. The plans are well considered and promising.
- The provision of accredited courses in Years 10 and 11 is good and work for these groups of pupils is also planned well.

- The provision of RE in the sixth form includes accredited courses, with an increasing number of students opting for the AS Philosophy course, encouraged by their attainment and enjoyment of the full GCSE course in Years 10 and 11. Provision also includes a Critical Thinking course.
- There is good enrichment of the curriculum through visits to places of worship and debating sessions during lunchtimes.

## Leadership and management of RE

The leadership and management of RE are good.

- The head of department is a skilled and enthusiastic subject leader who provides a good role model for staff and pupils. There is a strong sense of team work and collaboration.
- The subject's development priorities are strongly linked to those for the whole school, particularly in relation to curricular provision. Careful monitoring results in accurate self-evaluation.
- Assessment information is used effectively to track pupils' progress and to set realistic targets for improving performance.
- The department is very well organised and resources are used carefully.

## The promotion of community cohesion

RE makes a positive contribution to the promotion of community cohesion. Pupils speak very positively about the way RE provides opportunities to discuss religious diversity. In part, this is due to the trusting and open climate created in lessons. It is also due to the way diversity is welcomed more widely across the school. Pupils are confident in asking questions about religious beliefs and behaviour and know that their views are valued.

## Inclusion

The provision for inclusion is good. All pupils are encouraged to participate in lessons. Pupils requiring additional support are helped so that they can progress well in their learning. Careful tracking of pupils' progress successfully identifies and addresses underachievement.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring that teacher assessments in Key Stage 3 are moderated so that the consistency and accuracy of judgements are assured
- providing opportunities more routinely for pupils to record their own reflections on what they have studied.

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