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Mrs M Hastings-Trew
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Dear Mrs Hastings-Trew

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Religious Education

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 10 March 2008 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 yourself, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work, and observation of an assembly and three lessons.

The overall effectiveness of RE was judged to be outstanding.

Achievement and standards

The standards reached by pupils in RE are well above average and their achievement is outstanding.

- The standards reached by the pupils at the end of both Key Stage 1 and 2 are well above the expectations of the agreed syllabus. By the end of Year 2, pupils have acquired a good framework of knowledge and key terminology about religion. They are aware that religion is diverse and that people interpret ideas and stories in different ways. Their ability to engage with, and respond to, the meaning of religious material is also impressive, as demonstrated when one mixed age class

participated in a role play exercise exploring the complex feelings of the characters in the Palm Sunday story.

- By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils' ability to explain and interpret features of religious belief and practice is also well-above average. Their knowledge of key features of the Christian, Jewish and Muslim traditions is impressive. They can undertake independent enquiries into religion with confidence and ask very challenging and pertinent questions about religious matters. They also have a good understanding of the significance of religion in people's everyday lives and can debate some of the more controversial issues about religion in modern society. For example, the ability of Year 5 and 6 pupils to investigate and interpret sayings and stories from the Muslim tradition was impressive.
- The personal development of pupils in the context of RE is also outstanding. Throughout the school great attention is paid to ensuring pupils learn 'from' as well as 'about' religion and the subject makes a very positive contribution to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. As a result, pupils are aware, for example, of the diverse nature of religion in the modern world; they appreciate the way religion is part of a wider pattern of cultural and social diversity; and, they can explain many of the feelings which underpin people's religious or non-religious responses to the world. This was particularly evident in a splendid lesson with Year R/1 when children explored their feelings and thoughts about the arrival of Spring.

Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning in RE is outstanding.

- A key strength of the teaching of RE is the consistency of high quality across the school. Lessons are planned rigorously to ensure the learning is very well structured; the needs of the wide range of ages in each class are addressed skilfully. A mark of the exceptional teaching is the very effective sequencing of activities and management of learning to ensure pupils extract the most from stimulus material and consolidate their ideas before moving on.
- The teachers have an impressive level of subject knowledge which enables them to focus the children very effectively on the key learning objectives of the lesson. For example, an outstanding Year 2, 3 and 4 mixed age class sequenced a series of drama activities to enable pupils to build a very sophisticated picture of the complex significance of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem. They were then provided with a series of very well-designed written tasks to record their learning at a level appropriate for their age and ability. A particular strength of the teaching is the emphasis placed on encouraging pupils to work together in groups and to take responsibility for their own learning.
- Very good use is made of highly effective questioning and discussion and a wide range of engaging resources and tasks, including information and communication technology (ICT), all designed to challenge and extend children's thinking. Some pupils had prepared power-point presentations about their learning demonstrating

particularly good skills of researching the topic and organising their ideas.

- Work in RE is marked regularly and often with very helpful comments. As a result, pupils are often aware of ways in which they might improve their work.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum in RE is outstanding.

- Great care has been taken to develop the curriculum for RE to ensure: it meets the requirements of the agreed syllabus in detail; provides continuity and progression in the pupils' learning; and, addresses the needs of the mixed age classes.
- Skilful use has been made of the very helpful schemes of work provided by the local authority and SACRE. A specific strength is the way these schemes have been adapted slightly through the use of a cover sheet to draw out the key objectives and assessment criteria in ways that are easily accessible by the teachers and relate to the pupils' needs. Teachers annotate carefully the planning to indicate where they have adjusted or extended the activities. A well-designed, highly effective and manageable assessment process has been established which is implemented consistently. As a result, teachers are able to adjust planning effectively in the light of what they know about the children's progress.
- The use of a variety of ways of organising the delivery of the RE curriculum, sometimes linked to opportunities for fieldwork or use of visitors, ensures that the subject can achieve the depth of learning which is reflected in the high achievement. It is also enabling the teachers to forge appropriate links with other areas of the curriculum and with collective worship.
- Excellent use has been made of a local Connecting Communities project to make contact with local religious communities and provide regular opportunities for visits to places of worship and use of visitors. The links with a synagogue in Bradford and representatives of the Muslim community in Keighley are particularly effective. The planning of these opportunities is very skilful to ensure pupils gain maximum benefit. These complement the close links which exist with churches and clergy in the immediate locality which also provide a very good resource to stimulate children's learning.
- The older children indicated they would value more opportunities to explore issues about religion in the modern world and in the media, and they would like the chance for further discussions of their own ideas on important religious questions about, for example, the existence of God.

Leadership and management of RE

The leadership and management of RE is outstanding.

- The subject benefits from your excellent subject leadership. Your impressive understanding of the subject and skilful planning have

helped secure the consistent high quality of the teaching and outstanding achievement.

- The subject is reviewed and monitored on a clear three-year cycle and is due its next review later this year. The last review was extremely well-focused and provided a very rigorous analysis the pupil achievement and the quality of provision. Improvement planning is also highly effective and had secured the manageable, sustainable development of the subject. Very effective use has been made of the local authority support for RE and there are plans to provide a training session with the local RE adviser as part of the review of the subject.
- The subject also benefits from positive governor interest and support. Skilful use is made of the fieldwork to enable parents and governors to participate in the activities. The subject is well-resourced with a wide range of very stimulating and high quality artefacts, posters and texts as well as a very impressive collection of ICT resources.

The contribution of RE to the promotion of community cohesion

RE makes an excellent contribution to the promotion of community cohesion. The links to the local Connecting Communities project has yielded excellent results. Pupils thoroughly enjoy the opportunities to meet representatives from wide range of different religious groups. For example, the recent visit from an Imam was a great success and has fostered a longer term relationship with the Muslim community in Keighley. Although this is not a church school, the links with the Christian community in the village are very strong. A particular strength of the school is the way work on religious belief and practice is placed within a pattern of wider work on inter-cultural education, global awareness and fund raising. As a result, pupils gain a rich understanding of diversity which includes, and goes beyond, appreciating religious difference. A further strength is the way RE fieldwork is providing opportunities for parents and governors to develop links with other communities.

Inclusion

The arrangements for securing the inclusion of all pupils in RE are outstanding. Excellent in-class support and careful planning ensures pupils of all ages and abilities are engaged in their learning. Skilful attention is paid to the needs of the mixed age classes. Much of the learning has an open, investigative quality which encourages the active participation of all the pupils, and careful attention is paid to encouraging the interest of boys.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- exploring even more opportunities for older pupils to discuss issues about religion in the modern world and their own ideas about important religious questions alongside their investigation of three major religions.

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

Alan Brine
Her Majesty's Inspector