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Ms D Butler  
Headteacher  
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Dear Ms Butler

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Religious Education

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff and children, during my visit on 21 May 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 creative thinking in RE.

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 and a parent governor, discussions with pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work, and observation of four lessons.

The overall effectiveness of RE was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

Standards in RE by the end of Key Stage 2 are above the expectations of the agreed syllabus and the pupils' achievement is good.

- Pupils in the Foundation Stage make outstanding progress in developing their knowledge of key features of religion and their awareness of diversity. In a lesson on weddings they demonstrated a wide vocabulary about celebrations and participated enthusiastically in a simple stilling activity and a re-enactment of a Muslim wedding celebration.

- Pupils make satisfactory progress at Key Stage 1 and respond positively to the range of faith representatives who visit the school to support work in RE. They can identify key features of the religions they have studied and use some religious terminology appropriately.
- Pupils achieve well at Key Stage 2. As a result, the ability of pupils to explain their thinking about religious issues is above average. They develop a good understanding of religious diversity and are able to relate important aspects of their learning about religion to their own experience. They also have a clear framework of subject terminology in place to enable them to talk confidently about their learning.
- Occasionally, where planning is less secure, the pupils' ability to interlink their thinking about key aspects of human experience to their learning about religion is not so effective.
- RE makes a good contribution to pupils' wider personal development. Pupils find the subject worthwhile; in the words of one Year 6 pupil: 'We do things that are really interesting in RE and we enjoy it'. RE strongly supports the development of pupils' respect for, and appreciation of, diversity. It also provides good opportunities for pupils to reflect on their own experience and develop their thinking skills. Lessons provide good opportunities for the promotion of oracy and, on occasions, literacy skills, although there is scope to extend the contribution of the subject to the development of pupils' writing.

## Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning in RE is good.

- While there is some inconsistency in the quality of teaching and learning in RE, overall it is good and, on occasions, outstanding.
- At their best, RE lessons are well-planned and incorporate a wide variety of different activities which challenge and enthuse pupils. Teachers' questioning and explanations are good. They reflect a clear understanding of the importance of developing pupils' ability to examine and think about the key concepts of RE. For example, a Year 6 lesson on significant people provided a very good opportunity for the pupils to explore the concept of 'inspirational' at depth.
- Some good links are made between activities and lessons to ensure the sequencing of learning is effective. In a Year 3/4 lesson, skilful use was made of prior learning about the events of Easter week as a stimulus to explore the concept of life as a journey.
- Care is usually taken to ensure tasks are differentiated to match the differing abilities and ages of the pupils. Some good use is made of Information and Communication Technology and artefact resources to support learning. Work is often marked carefully and pupils receive helpful feedback on their progress.
- On occasions the learning objectives of lessons are not focused sufficiently on RE and the links between the two areas of attainment 'learning about' and 'learning from' RE are not clear enough.

## Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum in RE is good.

- The RE curriculum meets the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus and is planned to cover the key areas of study. This ensures there is good coverage of different religions and a balance of work across the attainment targets. There is a clear focus in much of the lesson planning on a key concept or question to ensure learning is effective.
- The school is exploring ways of incorporating RE effectively within a more creative model of curriculum planning. At present the school tends to use the published study units in the agreed syllabus as its medium term planning. The school has recognised the need to think more flexibly and creatively about this level of planning in RE. For example, recent work in lower Key Stage 2 using a block unit in teaching about Easter proved particularly effective in raising the level of challenge, providing more continuity in learning and promoting pupils' wider learning skills.
- The school has developed a very effective range of enrichment activities to extend and deepen pupils' learning in RE. Good use is being made of visitors from the local Interfaith Centre and visits to the local church to provide pupils with more first-hand experience of religious diversity. Year 6 pupils have been involved in some very powerful and moving learning, related to Holocaust Memorial Day, which had an important impact on their understanding of issues related to prejudice and discrimination. The school is also exploring the application of a 'Philosophy for Children' approach to the teaching of aspects of RE.
- Simple but effective arrangements are in place to assess and record pupils' progress against the levels in the agreed syllabus. These provide a sound basis for reporting to parents.

## Leadership and management of RE

The leadership and management of RE are good.

- The subject is led with enthusiasm and a clear vision for its future development. While formal opportunities for the professional development of staff in RE have been limited, the use of visitors from the Bradford Interfaith Centre together with other enrichment work has ensured teachers' subject knowledge is being refreshed and extended.
- The subject has very good capacity for further improvement and clear links are being forged between the development of RE and wider initiatives in the school, particularly in relation to curriculum planning.
- Although the formal arrangements for monitoring the curriculum are under-developed, the recent production of an RE self-evaluation

document indicates the school has a reasonably clear understanding of the priorities for improvement.

- The subject is well-supported by governors. The PTA provided a positive boost to the subject through the inclusion of a strong focus on valuing religious diversity in its attractive 2008 school calendar.

### Creative thinking in RE

The school is focusing attention on the place of creativity in RE. It is exploring the flexibility which exists in the locally agreed syllabus as a basis for developing more focused and deeper learning in RE. The move to blocking RE and exploring links with other areas of the curriculum, including literacy, is very positive. Some of the learning activities in RE provide a good basis for encouraging pupils to think creatively about religion. For example, a recent project in which older pupils developed rituals and symbols as way of exploring their own beliefs and commitments was particularly successful. Pupils are often set problems to solve as a feature of their work in RE and there is scope to extend this even further using the structures of the 'Philosophy for Children' approach to learning.

### Inclusion

The inclusion of all pupils in their RE learning is good. Work is usually differentiated appropriately to match the age and ability of pupils. Good use is made of in-class support to ensure all pupils make appropriate progress. There is a strong emphasis on ensuring the cultures and faiths of the relatively small number of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds are celebrated and valued.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- developing the level of medium term planning in RE in the context of exploring further ways of building the subject into the creative curriculum
- developing the arrangements for monitoring the effectiveness of RE.

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