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Mr J R Bingham
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Dear Mr Bingham

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Religious Education

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 14 July 2008 to look at work in religious education (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.

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 evidence used to inform the judgements made included: interviews with staff and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of two part lessons.

The overall effectiveness of RE was judged to be satisfactory with good features.

Achievement and standards

The standards reached by pupils in RE are broadly in line with expectations and their achievement is satisfactory.

- Standards across the school are broadly in line with those outlined in the Nottinghamshire agreed syllabus. Higher attaining pupils exceed these expectations. By the end of Year 6, pupils have a sound knowledge and understanding of the religions they have explored.

Pupils are generally more successful in 'learning about' religion than in 'learning from' religion.

- Overall, by the end of Year 2 and Year 6, pupils have a clear knowledge about the significance of religion in people's lives and describe features of beliefs and practices using correct terminology.
- The progress pupils make across the school is satisfactory overall. It is good when they are given opportunities to use more demanding skills of investigation and to think for themselves when considering religious beliefs and practices. However, this is not consistent across the school.
- The contribution of RE to pupils' personal development is good. Behaviour and attitudes to learning are very positive. Pupils have a strong sense of religious and cultural diversity and show respect towards that diversity. In one of the lessons observed and in discussions with them, pupils could clearly identify why it is important to respect diversity.

Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning in RE is good.

- Teaching is generally well-informed, confident and engaging. A broad range of resources and activities are used to engage pupils' interests and needs. The activities include role play, small group work and extended writing which ensures that pupils of all abilities, including those who have learning difficulties, are fully involved.
- Teachers offer regular, helpful comments on pupils' work and there is evidence of pupils responding to teachers' comments and questions. Teachers' evaluations of planning also give them a sound view of the progress made by pupils. The school has identified the need to moderate teachers' assessments, using the agreed syllabus levels of attainment when reviewing pupils' progress.
- Teaching and learning in RE make a valuable contribution to developing literacy across the curriculum.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum in RE is satisfactory.

- The curriculum is planned well and taught in blocked units which ensure that pupils have a coherent sense of religion. However, this is more successful with the teaching of Christianity than it is with the other religions taught across the school. The co-ordinator is aware that a new locally agreed syllabus is being developed and is, understandably, awaiting this before under-taking a more radical review of the RE curriculum. Currently, the curriculum is not always well-matched to pupils' learning needs and its limitations are a major reason why good teaching is not always being translated into good achievement in RE.

- Visits to local places of Christian worship benefit pupils and there are plans to extend visits to places of worship of other religions and to increase visits to school from members of other faith communities.

Leadership and management of RE

The leadership and management of RE are good.

- The RE coordinator is keen and has good subject knowledge which is kept updated. She supports other staff well.
- The monitoring of pupils' work and teachers' annotated planning gives the coordinator a secure grasp of strengths and areas for further improvement. Although the coordinator has other curriculum responsibilities, good attention is paid to ensuring that the quality of provision for RE is secure and sustainable. The right priorities are identified for strengthening pupils' achievement further.

The use of creative thinking in RE

There are some good examples of pupils expressing their personal responses through the performing and creative arts. They enjoy practical activities, such as role play and making scrolls. Pupils in discussion reported that teaching encourages them to think critically but would value more opportunities to express their own opinions about what they are learning in RE.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- implementing the revised plans for teaching and adjusting them in the light of the reviewed locally agreed syllabus
- ensuring that there is a better balance between the two attainment targets by providing opportunities for pupils to 'learn from religion' more systematically.

As I explained in my previous letter, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority/SACRE and will be published on Ofsted's website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Dilip Kadodwala
Her Majesty's Inspector