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Mrs M Charlton  
Headteacher  
Lee on the Solent Junior School  
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Dear Mrs Charlton

Ofsted subject survey: identifying good practice in religious education (RE)

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 05 December 2008 to look at work in RE. Please pass on my particular thanks to Kathy Bagley, Emma Fall and Peter Sutton.

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 without their consent.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included: discussions with yourself, your RE subject leader and one of the governors, a meeting with a group of teachers and a group of pupils, and observation of a Year 3 RE lesson.

Features of good practice observed

- The RE subject leadership in the school is outstanding. The school's excellent provision for RE has been recognised at local authority level through the appointment of the subject leader as an advanced skills teacher to support the dissemination of good practice. Your support as headteacher has been an important part of this success.
- The highly innovative and challenging approach to RE embedded in the locally agreed syllabus has been implemented effectively and consistently throughout the school. As a result, the school's evaluations confirm that standards in RE are high and the quality of provision is excellent.
- An outstanding Year 3 lesson was observed on the topic of 'Angels'. The pupils' achievement in the lesson was impressive. Their ability to interpret and analyse the significance which angels might have for Christians was exceptional. Very effective use as made of imaginative resources, very creative teaching and excellent classroom management to secure the

outstanding progress. They also demonstrated an exceptional ability to 'stand in the shoes' of a Christian, seeing the issues they were investigating from that perspective.

- The school has identified the shift in the level and nature of pupils' learning which has flowed from its innovative approach to the subject. Pupils are now able to use a wider range of skills when investigating and responding to religious material. They have developed a stronger and more coherent framework of terminology and understanding within which to locate their learning and are better able to make connections between different aspects of the subject. They can respond at a more personal level to the learning, asking more personal and incisive questions; as a result, they are better able to understand the significance and impact of commitment and belief. The contribution made to the pupils' broad personal development is outstanding.
- The guidance of the subject leader, linked with the highly effective use made of support materials from the local authority, has secured a high level of subject expertise across the school. Teachers are confident in teaching the subject and have grasped the distinctive learning process which underpins the agreed syllabus. They are also aware that developments in RE have helped them extend their wider thinking about a more skills-based and conceptual approach to learning.
- This impressive subject leadership is reflected in the very good arrangements to support teachers' planning and professional development and to monitor the effectiveness of the provision. The use made of a shared framework of terminology about the process of learning has enabled all teachers to talk about, plan and evaluate their teaching of the subject in a coherent and efficient way.
- Pupils are very positive about the subject. Those interviewed from Year 6 spoke warmly about the value of RE and were able to explain in some detail the way that their learning is based on a sequence of key questions; these were essentially the pupils' interpretation of the process of learning in the agreed syllabus. This level of understanding on the part of pupils about the way they learn in RE is unusually impressive.
- Good use has been made of the guidance within the agreed syllabus to help to develop the use made of local contacts to support learning in RE. It has, in particular, enabled the local vicar to shift the focus of his contribution from delivering information to engaging pupils' responses to the meaning of aspects of Christian practice.
- The pattern of curriculum delivery is well-constructed. Different approaches are adopted depending on the nature of the topic and the needs of the wider curriculum. Increasingly, use is being made of blocked units to secure greater coherence and more sustained learning. The lesson observed was a case in point. There is a careful balance of work to ensure a wide range of aspects of the subject are covered. The selection of concepts and content is designed to ensure there is good progression in the pupils' learning.

- The subject leader has adopted a sensible and considered approach to assessment in RE. The emphasis has been on helping teachers develop a rounded approach to evaluating pupils' learning, and on promoting independent writing rather than recording information. A detailed portfolio of exemplar material has been collected and teachers are encouraged to evaluate the learning process carefully in order to adjust future planning.

#### Areas for development

- At present, levels are not used to differentiate the learning objectives in the planning. It would be worth considering whether this might provide a useful way of tracking the progress of pupils and identifying any patterns within their achievement.
- The pupils spoke of their enthusiasm for out of school learning in RE and hoped that they might have opportunities to visit a wider range of places of worship within the local area.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop RE in the school.

As I explained previously, 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