

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404040
F 020 7421 6855
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



1 October 2009

Mr M Bailie
Headteacher
Finham Park School
Green Lane
Coventry
West Midlands
CV3 6EA

Dear Mr Bailie

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Religious Education (RE)

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit, on 22 and 23 September 2009, to look at work in RE.

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of the RE, the visit had a particular focus on how far students are becoming effective learners 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 staff and learners, scrutiny of relevant documentation and observation of five lessons.

The overall effectiveness of RE is good.

Achievement in RE

The achievement of students in RE is good.

- Standards at Key Stage 3 are in line with the expectations of the Coventry agreed syllabus. Most students acquire a broad understanding of the key features of religions they have studied. Students' learning is enriched by opportunities to reflect on beliefs they have encountered and to articulate their own viewpoints, which they do confidently and skilfully.

- Attainment at Key Stage 4 is above the national average, as indicated by the full and short course GCSE results over the last two years. Students make good progress in their learning and greatly enjoy exploring and responding to religious and ethical issues in an informed way.
- The subject is increasingly popular in the sixth form. Although results at AS and A-level are broadly average overall, they represent good progress in the context of an open entry policy for students taking the subject.
- The contribution of RE to students' personal development is good. Students value the part the subject plays in engendering respect for diversity, and in promoting cohesion in the school and the wider community.
- Behaviour in the lessons observed was good and, from discussions, it was evident that students very much enjoyed RE.

Quality of teaching of RE

The quality of teaching is good.

- In the lessons observed, students' needs were met well. Effective teaching and a wide range of strategies and tasks ensured that students were engaged and interested.
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge which they use skilfully to deepen students' knowledge and understanding. Students particularly value structured discussions, as well as opportunities to make objects, such as paper lotus flowers, because it enables them to display a wider range of skills.
- On-going assessment of students' work is fit for purpose, including the marking policy which students understand well. There are some challenging end-of-unit assessment tasks which use the level descriptors from the agreed syllabus in a helpful way, so that students understand how well they are achieving. However, these assessed tasks are not formally moderated to ensure rigour and consistency in assessment across Key Stage 3.

Quality of the curriculum in RE

The quality of the curriculum is good.

- The schemes of work have been adjusted to take account of the 2007 Coventry agreed syllabus, particularly in Years 8 and 9. The department has made a vigorous and helpful contribution to the innovative approaches to the delivery of RE in Year 7 through the integrated humanities curriculum.
- The revised schemes provide challenge and promote creativity in learning, through structured key questions and interesting tasks and activities.
- The Key Stage 4 curriculum is planned well. Opportunities for continuing professional development ensure that teachers keep

abreast of developments in GCSE requirements. The positive impact of the curriculum and teachers' professionalism is evident in the students' results in externally accredited examinations.

- Students benefit from visits to places of worship. Those following the GCSE courses benefit particularly from speakers from a range of external charities and organisations. The department is keen to widen the range of visiting speakers further.
- The provision in the sixth form includes AS and A-level courses which students greatly appreciate and enjoy. Currently, there is a shortfall in meeting the recommended time specified in the agreed syllabus for the sixth form. However, there are secure plans in place to rectify this shortcoming.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in RE

The leadership and management of RE are good.

- The department has made good progress over recent years and this reflects the enthusiasm, commitment and astute leadership of the subject leader. One of the outcomes is seen in the rising trend of GCSE results.
- Self-evaluation is accurate and good direction is given to improving students' achievement through work scrutiny and lesson observations. The department makes a strong contribution to the school's role as a training school, and students benefit from fresh ideas about teaching and learning.
- There is a sense of common purpose and staff work well as a team, making good use of individual strengths and professional development opportunities. These make a good impact on students' achievement. More widely, the department has made a useful contribution to the Coventry learning gateway resource base, which is used by teachers across the local authority.

How far pupils are becoming effective learners in RE

There are plenty of opportunities for students to reflect thoughtfully on their learning. The subject makes a positive contribution to the development of students' wider learning and thinking skills. Regular questionnaires enable staff to act on students' views. The department is keen to develop peer-assessment further, as a means of encouraging effective learning.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring consistency and rigour in the use of assessment criteria at Key Stage 3, through regular moderation and exemplification of students' levelled work
- ensuring that the time allocated to RE in the sixth form accords with the recommendations of the agreed syllabus.

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