

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

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



28 October 2009

Mr C Williams
Headteacher
Moreton Community School
Old Fallings Lane
Wolverhampton
WV10 8BY

Dear Mr Williams

Ofsted survey inspection programme – religious education (RE)

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 19 and 20 October 2009, to look at work in RE.

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of the subject, 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 students and teachers, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work and observation of five lessons.

The overall effectiveness of RE was judged to be satisfactory.

Achievement in RE

Achievement in RE is satisfactory and improving.

- The strength of the students' achievement across all key stages is their ability to use higher order thinking skills to interrogate, analyse and evaluate religious and philosophical issues and concepts. Most students are able to present their ideas orally but are less successful in presenting cogent written arguments. Students' understanding and evaluation of the meaning and significance of the key beliefs of Christianity is good. However, their grasp of the key beliefs of other faiths is more limited.
- Students' arrive in the school with a pattern of prior attainment in RE that is generally well below average and some cases exceptionally low. By the

end of Year 9, students' attainment, although below the expected level, is improving year on year because of the sustained good teaching. Moreover, changes in the curriculum have led to a marked improvement in the achievement of boys; consequently, the gap in attainment between boys and girls is gradually reducing. The pattern of achievement across Key Stage 3, while satisfactory and improving, could be even higher if the assessment arrangements were sharper.

- Results in the GCSE full course are exceptionally low but improving. This reflects satisfactory and sometimes good achievement for the very small numbers of students entered for the examination. Current assessment data and work in books indicate that most students studying the recently introduced GCSE short course are making satisfactory progress.
- RE makes a positive contribution towards students' personal development particularly at Key Stage 3. The subject encourages students to take matters of faith and religion seriously and to respect the views of others. Students' attitudes towards the subject are good, supported by the strong focus on challenging them to think for themselves. They are clear that the subject provides good opportunities for them to articulate their own ideas, to express opinions, and learn to respect the views of others.

Quality of teaching of RE

The quality of teaching is good.

- Teaching is characterised by good subject knowledge, combined with high expectations about challenging students to think. Skilful use is made of strategies to engage students in deeper levels of analysis; students are encouraged at every opportunity to think about how and what they are learning.
- Excellent account is taken of how young people learn and how to develop their thinking skills. Tasks cover a wide variety of learning styles allowing students to achieve as well as they can; including tasks that develop their ability to research and write independently. Students work well together. Many concentrate for sustained periods, engaging in group work in a mature and sensible manner. Stimulating RE displays are prominent in classrooms giving students a valuable resource to draw upon during lessons.
- Significant and thoughtful work has been undertaken to develop the pattern of assessment in RE. Structured, manageable and levelled assessment tasks are in place. Some good use is made of self- and peer-assessment; this is beginning to enable students to evaluate their own, and others' work. However, as yet, judgements are not reliable or robust enough, particularly in Key Stage 3 where not all assessments relate clearly enough to the pattern of progression outlined in the schemes of work. Although marking is regular, it does not consistently give precise advice to the students on how to improve their work. As a result, students

do not always understand the use being made of levels or how they relate to the assessments.

Quality of the curriculum in RE

The curriculum in RE is satisfactory.

- The RE curriculum does not fully meet the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus in respect of its requirement for all students to study RE. Although at present only a small number study RE in Year 11, the requirements will be fully met from next year. However, the curriculum as it is delivered meets the needs of the students, particularly those who find learning difficult. A comprehensive and fully documented scheme of work is in place with effective use of the levels in planning to pitch students' learning. As a result, the overall pattern of progression and continuity in the Key Stage 3 curriculum is becoming more secure.
- The curriculum at Key Stage 3 includes some innovative and challenging features designed to engage students' interest and ensure the work has relevance to their lives. Many units are designed to promote higher order skills of analysis and evaluation, and the engagement with demanding religious and philosophical thinking. The school is exploring different models of curriculum delivery for RE including blocking work to provide more sustained sequences of learning.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in RE

The effectiveness of leadership and management is satisfactory.

- There is a clear commitment to improvement and to ensuring statutory requirements are met. The recently appointed head of department is an effective classroom teacher. She is developing skills through leadership training which should help the new team to develop a clear sense of direction. Together with the support of the senior leadership team, she is promoting the subject's increasing popularity in the school. She has begun to meld a cohesive team, establishing a successful pattern of joint working with her colleagues. This is ensuring the process of developing the newly revised curriculum planning is productive and effective.
- A good subject evaluation was produced to support the preparation for this visit with an accurate evaluation of the subject's current position within the school.

How far students are becoming effective learners in RE

Thinking and learning skills are systematically embedded in the subject's long- and medium-term planning. Students are actively encouraged to identify their own questions and develop their own lines of enquiry into religion. In addition, students use more creative activities to explore and express their responses to religion.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- raising standards by improving the quality, reliability and consistency of assessment and marking, particularly at Key Stage 3.

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

Jacqueline Wordsworth
Her Majesty's Inspector