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21 December 2009

Mrs M Barry  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Barry

Ofsted 2009-10 subject survey inspection programme: religious education (RE)

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 11 December 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 well pupils 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.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included interviews with pupils and teachers, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work, attendance at assembly and observation of lessons.

The overall effectiveness of RE is outstanding.

Achievement in RE

Achievement in RE is outstanding.

- Standards in RE throughout the school are well above the expectations of the Calderdale agreed syllabus; this represents outstanding achievement by the pupils.
- The pupils' knowledge and understanding of a diversity of religions and beliefs are excellent. They also develop an impressive ability to discuss different religious ideas and they express their own points of view confidently. By the end of Key Stage 1, for example, they had a clear

understanding of some key features of Islam and could explain their importance for Muslims. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 had undertaken some interesting independent investigations into religion in the local community; while pupils in Years 3 and 4 were able to talk about a number of issues arising from their study of different religious moral teachings.

- Pupils have a very positive attitude towards RE and can explain why they think it is important to understand different religions and cultures. They are provided with good opportunities to work collaboratively and independently in RE. The subject makes an outstanding contribution to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and, in particular, cultural development.

#### Quality of teaching of RE

The quality of teaching is good with outstanding features.

- RE lessons are planned well and delivered with enthusiasm. In the best cases, teaching is energetic and challenging. Pupils are provided with a clear understanding of the purpose and direction of their learning. Prior learning is consolidated carefully to ensure pupils build their understanding effectively.
- RE lessons engender an ethos of enquiry and discussion ensuring that the values of openness and respect for others' viewpoints are reinforced. A range of different teaching strategies is used including good group work and independent research activities. Some impressive use is made of information and communication technology to extend pupils' learning.
- As the pupils get older, the opportunities in RE to use more challenging forms of writing and to involve them more actively in planning their work could be extended further.
- Pupils' work is marked carefully and good use is made of a simple but effective means of recording their progress against the levels in the agreed syllabus. Occasionally, the focus of the marking is limited to literacy skills with not quite enough emphasis on their RE achievement.

#### Quality of the curriculum in RE

The curriculum in RE is outstanding.

- The school has successfully and skilfully implemented the recently published locally agreed syllabus. This has been used to good effect to support planning and secure a well-designed, carefully balanced and progressive curriculum. RE is represented well in the curriculum for Early Years Foundation Stage.
- A range of different patterns of delivery of RE is deployed depending on the topic and the scope to forge connections with other areas of work. Good links are made with, most significantly, personal, social and health education and literacy. This varied model of delivery helps to secure the effectiveness of the provision.

- A major strength of RE is the very impressive and extensive pattern of enrichment activities. Outstanding use is made of visits to, and visitors from, local religious communities including a twinning arrangement with a more culturally diverse local school. The school's international links are also used very well to support pupils' learning in RE.

#### Effectiveness of leadership and management in RE

The effectiveness of leadership and management in RE is outstanding.

- RE is led with energy and vision. The potential of the subject to contribute to pupils' personal development and the promotion of community cohesion is understood and fully exploited. The governors play a key role in supporting the subject.
- The arrangements for monitoring the subject are clear, manageable and effective. It is reviewed annually; the priorities for development are articulated well and embedded in the wider school-improvement plan.
- RE is taught by the class teachers who have been provided with good opportunities for professional development through the regular focus on RE in staff meetings. Very good use is also made of the local authority support and network meetings. The resources to support learning in RE are excellent.

#### How well pupils are becoming effective learners in RE.

RE makes a very positive contribution to the development of pupils' wider learning skills. Many of the tasks in RE are challenging and require pupils to think for themselves and work collaboratively with others. They are encouraged to reflect on their learning and take responsibility for doing their own research and presenting their findings.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- considering the scope to use a wider range of writing in RE and for pupils to take a more active role in planning their work.

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

Alan Brine  
Her Majesty's Inspector