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Mrs C Hodgson
Headteacher
Richard Durning's Endowed
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Chorley Road
Bispham
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Dear Mrs Hodgson

Ofsted 2010-11 subject survey inspection programme: religious education (RE)

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and pupils, during my visit on 8 June 2010 to look at work 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 without their consent.

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

The overall effectiveness of RE is satisfactory with some good features.

Achievement in RE

Achievement in RE is satisfactory.

- Standards by the end of Key Stage 1 are broadly in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. By the end of Key Stage 2 they are above expectations. This represents satisfactory achievement.
- The best progress is made in the upper years of Key Stage 2 where, as a result of effective teaching, pupils acquire a good understanding of belief and the impact it makes on people's lives. Good examples were seen of extended independent evaluative writing exploring the dilemmas sometimes posed by religious commitment.
- In the Foundation Stage, Key Stage 1 and Year 3, pupils make satisfactory but uneven progress. While they acquire some knowledge of a range of

features of religion, they often struggle to link their learning and are not always clear enough about what they have achieved.

- RE makes a positive contribution to the wider aspects of pupils' personal development. They enjoy RE and value the opportunity it provides to explore different religions and cultures. The subject promotes pupils' social and moral development effectively. Attention is also given to fostering a understanding of the spiritual dimension of life.

Quality of teaching of RE

The quality of teaching of RE is satisfactory with some good features.

- RE lessons are planned well and orderly. Teachers manage the challenge of mixed-age classes effectively. Some good use is made of pair and group work, and teaching assistants make a positive contribution to learning.
- In the best lessons, activities are matched well to pupils' interests and abilities. Learning is challenging and engaging, opportunities are provided for independent work, and a good range of strategies is used to maintain pace and concentration. A particularly effective upper Key Stage 2 lesson on the life of Eric Liddell provided pupils with good opportunities to extend their ability to evaluate the impact of belief. The work was carefully differentiated to ensure all pupils made good progress.
- Where teaching is less effective, the purpose of the learning is sometimes unclear, the match of tasks to pupils' abilities is less secure, and the sequencing of learning within and between lessons is not so effective.
- The quality of assessment is variable. While some teaching uses questioning well to check pupils' understanding, this is not consistent. Work is marked regularly but again practice is variable. On occasions teachers' comments are related to the learning objectives with limited reference to pupils' actual achievement.

Quality of the curriculum in RE

The quality of the curriculum in RE is satisfactory.

- The school bases its curriculum very closely on the local authority's guidance. However, it is finding great difficulty in implementing the recommended scheme of work and matching it to the pupils' needs and starting points.
- While some of the planning, particularly that for the older pupils, works well, the process of interpreting and integrating the fields of enquiry of the agreed syllabus within the learning in other units is often unclear.
- The pattern of work provides an appropriate balance between teaching about Christianity and non-Christian religions. The approach to the subject also balances carefully the open investigation into religion with opportunities for pupils to develop their own thinking about beliefs and values. Care is taken to incorporate work on the two areas of attainment, 'learning about and from' religion. At its best, this incorporation works

well, but on occasions the move to explore pupils' own experience is at the expense of a more careful exploration of the religious material itself.

- The school has recognised that the current pattern of delivery of RE tends to limit the opportunity for cross-curricular work and can lead to fragmentation in pupils' learning. Plans are in place to explore more creative approaches towards the RE curriculum.
- Good links have been forged with the local church to enrich pupils' learning. The school is extending work relating RE to the wider world through its charitable activities and international links. While this enables the subject to support the promotion of community cohesion, the opportunities for pupils to directly experience the wider religious diversity in the local area are very limited.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in RE

The effectiveness of leadership and management in RE is good.

- The leadership of RE has secured its place within the curriculum and provides good capacity for the improvement of the subject. Statutory requirements are met and the school is reporting its data on pupils' attainment to the local authority as requested. Long-term planning is organised to match the need to teach RE in mixed-age classes.
- There has been some sensibly targeted monitoring of the subject which has included scrutiny of planning and pupils' work and an audit of staff evaluations and training needs. This has led to an action plan identifying the need to develop the curriculum and extend subject training. It has, for example, identified the need to make more flexible and creative use of the locally agreed syllabus in planning RE.
- While opportunities for professional development have been limited in the past, the school has approached the local authority subject adviser to provide support.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- developing the RE curriculum to ensure a better match to pupils' starting points and needs
- providing more opportunities for sustained learning in RE and stronger links with the wider curriculum
- extending the opportunities for pupils to engage at first hand with a wider range of religious communities.

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 the Ofsted website under the URN for your school. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Alan Brine
Her Majesty's Inspector