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Mrs M Sancto
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Sancto

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 13 July 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 two lessons.

The overall effectiveness of RE is good.

Achievement in RE

Achievement in RE is good.

- The attainment of pupils by the end of Key Stage 1 and 2 is above the expectations of Swindon's agreed syllabus. This reflects good achievement.
- Pupils in Key Stage 1 are able to talk about the similarities between religions, such as the importance of the Bible and Qur'an in the lives of followers. They understand the significance of celebrations and are able to explore their own feelings about religion. In Key Stage 2, pupils are able to make connections between religious beliefs and practice and their own experiences. They understand that religion plays an important role in bringing communities together. They are keen to debate the philosophical

questions underpinning religion, such as 'The actual existence of God' and 'the importance of proof versus belief.'

- The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development. Pupils are keen to explain that the study of religion ensures that they gain a greater understanding of differences in religious practice and that it creates respect across different communities.

Quality of teaching of RE

The quality of teaching of RE is good.

- Since September, the school has started the process of assessing pupils' achievements in RE through regular assessment opportunities. This, along with effective questioning, enables teachers to set work that, on the whole, meets the needs of different groups of pupils. Book scrutiny indicates that this relatively new initiative is not consistently applied and occasionally the work set does not offer the appropriate challenge. In some cases, marking does not provide pupils with the next steps in their learning.
- The clear explanation of learning objectives and good discussions ensure that pupils understand the direction and purpose of the lessons. As a result, pupils are clear about the learning that has taken place and talk with confidence about their new knowledge and understanding in RE.
- Teachers use a variety of resources and strategies to engage and motivate pupils, such as information and communication and technology (ICT), drama, speaking and listening and presentations. Pupils enjoy the opportunity to work in teams so that they can explore their own learning and set their own questions. They work well together, listening and sharing ideas and carefully considering opposing views. In the past, they particularly enjoyed using the schools 'learning platform' to plan and carry out their own research project on Sikhism in Year 6. The school is now working towards creating greater opportunities for pupils to carry out their own research.

Quality of the curriculum in RE

The quality of the curriculum in RE is good.

- The curriculum has been planned carefully and now meets the requirements of the agreed syllabus. Schemes of work are very detailed and staff constantly review them to provide memorable and meaningful experiences for pupils.
- The school is now considering how best to adapt the planning so that teachers are clear about the necessary skills required to develop pupils' thinking skills such that pupils are more fully engaged in their own research-based learning.
- Pupils have good links with the local community and have visited a variety of churches and cathedrals to support their understanding of Christianity.

However, the opportunity to visit places of non-Christian worship or have a range of speakers from other traditions is limited.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in RE

The effectiveness of leadership and management in RE is good.

- The RE leader has a good understanding of the strengths and areas for development within RE as a result of the accurate self-evaluation and a detailed action plan. Monitoring activities, such as the scrutiny of pupils' books and staff evaluations of the curriculum, have resulted in many changes over the last two years.
- The subject leader has rightly identified the need to introduce a regular cycle of moderation to ensure that assessments are accurate and to extend monitoring activities to include the pupils' views.
- Clear systems are in place to evaluate RE and make any necessary changes in the future. As a result of this, the subject leader is well placed to ensure the continuous improvement in this area.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- developing planning so that it systematically develops pupils' thinking skills and provides pupils with greater opportunities to be involved in their own research-based learning
- ensuring that pupils are consistently challenged to achieve their best by providing work that meets their individual needs
- developing opportunities for pupils to visit a variety of religious places of worship and meet representatives from different faiths.

I hope that 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

Susan Gadd
Her Majesty's Inspector