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Mrs C Rich  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Rich

**Ofsted 2011–12 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 December 2011 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, a governor 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.

- Pupils' attainment by the end of Key Stage 2 is broadly in line with the expectations in the locally agreed syllabus. This represents good achievement.
- During their time in the school, pupils develop a good knowledge of a range of aspects of different religions. A particular strength is the development of their skills of questioning and investigation. Pupils are able to discuss ideas arising from their learning with confidence. They can also offer thoughtful responses to their learning. For example, pupils in a Year 3 lesson offered a range of personal ideas about angels confidently using language such as 'secretive' and 'protective' to describe how they imagine

their qualities. Pupils are sometimes less confident in their more in-depth and systematic understanding of different religious beliefs.

- The quality of learning in RE is good. Pupils collaborate well and can participate effectively in structured philosophical discussion. In one Year 5 lesson, for example, pupils debated the concept of power arising from their engagement with the story of the Noah and the flood. They can also undertake independent research and use a variety of strategies to record and present their work.
- Pupils enjoy RE. Their behaviour in lessons and attitudes towards their learning are excellent. They can explain the value of RE and recognise how it helps them to become more understanding of different points of view.

### **Quality of teaching in RE**

The quality of teaching in RE is good.

- In the lessons observed the learning was managed very effectively to ensure that all pupils made good progress. A variety of imaginative and well structured approaches was used to secure the pupils' active involvement in their learning. Some outstanding use was made of reflection and discussion to enable the pupils to deepen their thinking and understanding. Teachers encourage pupils to work independently and use a wide range of skills to research and present their findings, including some good use of information and communication technology.
- Although teachers generally have a good level of subject knowledge, the quality of planning across the school is variable. For example, while much of the teaching embodies a clear enquiry-based approach to learning, this is not yet fully consistent across all the planning. Occasionally, the teaching can lose focus on the main purpose and direction of the topic. On these occasions pupils cannot always see how their learning links together.
- Work in RE is marked regularly but the comments do not always include a clear focus on their progress in the subject. The school has identified the need to develop a more systematic approach towards the recording of pupils' progress in RE.

### **Quality of the curriculum in RE**

The quality of the curriculum in RE is good.

- The provision for RE meets statutory requirements and follows closely the curriculum guidance and materials provided by the local authority. The scheme of work is in the process of development and is being trialled this year.
- The curriculum incorporates work on a range of religions, re-visiting Christianity each year. The long-term planning identifies the key concept and content to be explored in each unit. The provision incorporates a flexible approach towards the delivery of RE. It offers a variety of areas for investigation with good opportunities to embrace the wider school

priorities of developing literacy and oracy, enquiry skills and 'philosophy for children' approaches. Although there is progression in the level of work required across the key stage, the school is aware that it needs to evaluate carefully whether the pupils' understanding of different religions is being extended systematically.

- The best planning is impressive and identifies the overarching objectives of each unit, a well-defined process of enquiry and highlights assessment opportunities. In other cases, the planning, while detailed, does not incorporate a clear enough focus for the learning and is unsure about how pupils' progress will be assessed.
- The subject makes a positive contribution to all aspects of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Good use is made of the immediate local community to enrich the pupils' learning. Local clergy and parents from minority religious communities make a positive contribution to the learning. The school has not found it easy to develop links with other religious communities in the region and opportunities to visit a variety of places of worship are limited although this is a priority for development in the action plan.

### **Effectiveness of leadership and management in RE**

The effectiveness of leadership and management in RE is good.

- RE benefits from enthusiastic and committed leadership. It is well-supported by the senior leadership team and has a high profile in the wider life of the school. The subject leader is well-informed about the approach to RE in locally agreed syllabus and has developed a good level of subject expertise.
- The process of reviewing, monitoring and improving RE is currently satisfactory. Action plans tend to focus on management tasks rather than raising standards and the pattern of monitoring needs a sharper focus. A recently produced 'Next steps' document is bringing more rigour to this process with an emphasis on extending challenge and developing the assessment arrangements.
- Staffing and resourcing are good. Some RE is delivered by higher level teaching assistants as part of planning, preparation and assessment time. There is a recognition that these arrangements need to be supported and managed carefully.
- Opportunities for training are satisfactory. The subject leader is involved in a local support group and maintains links with the local RE resource centre. A focus for professional development within school has been on working alongside staff informally and on supporting the newly qualified teacher. Recent opportunities for more formal whole staff training in RE have been limited.
- A key strength of RE is the contribution it makes to, and the way it reflects, the wider priorities, commitments and values of the school.

**Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:**

- securing greater consistency in the quality of the planning, teaching and assessment of RE by:
  - sharing best practice in planning and teaching
  - ensuring that all units of work have clarity of purpose and well defined and differentiated learning objectives
  - identifying assessment opportunities and establishing a manageable approach towards recording pupils' progress
  - ensuring that there is a more systematic pattern of progression in the development of pupils' understanding of specific religions
- establishing a more rigorous approach to monitoring and improvement planning with a clearer focus on raising standards.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop RE in the school.

As explained previously, a copy of this letter will be published on the Ofsted website and sent to SACRE. It may be used to inform decisions about any future inspection. A copy of this letter is also being sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

**Alan Brine**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**