

## **RE monitoring visits: summer/autumn term 2010**

### **Introduction**

This report is based upon visits to four schools - three primary, one secondary. The low numbers are due to the short period between the last SACRE meeting and the date for this term's submission of papers (29<sup>th</sup> September). Following on from the discussion at the last meeting, the Principal School improvement Adviser, Tim Lomas, has agreed that schools can be re-visited at the RE Adviser's discretion.

### **Primary Schools**

In two of the schools RE is very strong. One is a very small rural school where RE is fully integrated, but clearly identified, into the curriculum. This allows pupils to pursue their own areas of interest and visits can sometimes be arranged 'on the hoof.' For example, pupils were taken to the local church in the middle of a lesson about beliefs and sacred places. As a result they learn about religion within a real context and come to a clear understanding of the place of faith in peoples' lives. Despite the lack of proximity to a variety of places of worship, every effort is made to raise pupils' awareness of a range of beliefs and cultures through the visitors who come into the school and highly effective use of ICT. By contrast, the second school is in Lincoln and has some extremely challenging pupils. The RE co-ordinator is very experienced and receives a great deal of support from the headteacher. This ensures that the subject has a high profile in the school, evidenced by excellent displays and through conversations with the pupils. Pupils were keen to discuss profound issues such as the existence of God, the problem of knowledge (e.g. 'How do we know there are things we can't see?') as well as ethical questions. The headteacher also prioritises the development of spirituality and inclusivity. Opportunities to learn about a range of faiths and cultures are offered through visits out, visitors in and through different areas of the curriculum.

The third school had a newly appointed RE co-ordinator. Much work needs to be done to bring provision up to the required standard and the headteacher agreed that a second visit be made during the summer term 2011.

### **Areas of strength**

- Strong subject leadership backed up by effective support from the headteacher.
- Strong emphasis on staff training for RE.
- Positive attitudes from teachers and pupils.

### **Areas for development**

- Continue to develop assessment so that it informs pupils about what they need to do to improve and make progress.

### **Secondary School**

RE is led and managed by an enthusiastic subject specialist who prepared a detailed report for the visit. There are a large number of teachers involved in the teaching of RE (not all subject specialists) but this is managed well.

The head of department considers RE to be outstanding in the school but this is not the case. There is not a clear enough view about standards, especially at key stage 3 and teaching observed was only satisfactory. Planning is good overall but does not indicate opportunities for students to have first hand experiences of faith communities. This was identified by Ofsted as an area for development. Statutory requirements are not fully met as in year 10 the subject is only optional, though aspects are covered in citizenship and PSHE. The quality of this provision has not been monitored. Examination results need to be analysed much more rigorously.

### **Acts of Collective Worship**

In two of the primary schools these have a very high profile with a strong spiritual dimension and emphasis upon worship. This is enhanced by inspirational singing. Key festivals are celebrated in the local church. In one school there has been some opposition from parents to what is perceived as an overly religious approach but the school's practice is in keeping with statutory requirements for a daily act of collective worship.

### **Support for schools/other work**

1. Training: RE for HLTAs (6 day course), Subject leadership: Secondary (1 day)
2. Support for newly appointed secondary head of RE.
3. Initial planning for Celebrating RE day and next conference.

**Wendy Harrison**  
**September 2010**