

NAME OF COMMITTEE:	STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
DATE OF MEETING:	8 March 2011
SUBJECT:	Summary of monitoring visits to Lincolnshire schools following Ofsted inspections, with reference to Religious Education and acts of collective worship.
REPORT BY:	Religious Education Adviser
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IS THE REPORT EXEMPT?	No
IS THE REPORT CONFIDENTIAL?	No

SUMMARY: The report summarises the positive features and areas for development in schools monitored since the last meeting on 9th November 2010

DISCUSSION: The Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) initiated new inspection arrangements from 2005, with less notice to schools and shorter, more focused inspections. The most recent Framework under these arrangements was introduced in September 2009. Religious Education remains statutory in all schools but inspection reports no longer include a detailed subject paragraph. Acts of collective worship may be referred to in the 'outcomes for individuals or groups of pupils' section.

RECOMMENDATION: That the report be noted and any comments made be included as necessary.

APPENDICES – these are listed below and attached at the back of the report.
Appendix 1 – Summary of RE Monitoring visits.

BACKGROUND PAPERS: No background papers of the Local Government Act 1972 were used in the preparation of this report.

RE monitoring visits: autumn 2010/ spring 2011

Introduction

This report is based upon visits to eleven schools (including one re-visit) - nine primary, two secondary.

Primary Schools

There are no serious causes for concern in any of these schools. One school stands out as providing inspirational RE due to the clear vision of the subject co-ordinator. Overall, the Agreed Syllabus is used well to plan lessons and teachers regularly make positive comments about how user friendly and helpful it is. Policies for RE clearly set out a framework for teaching and learning, though in some schools they are out of date and in need of review. There is still some misunderstanding about how many religions should be taught and in two of the schools there is a danger of overload. Schools have been advised not to adopt the 'one religion a year' approach. The majority understand that the focus of teaching and learning should be on the four main concepts set out in the syllabus, though some have not actually carried out an audit to see if these could be identified in planning. In one school all of the RE is taught by the co-ordinator. This has the advantage of making planning and monitoring easier but it may also lead to a lack of ownership on the part of other teachers and possibly lead to RE having a low profile in the school.

All the schools ensure that pupils visit local churches and in some cases, the cathedral. Where possible visits are made to other places of worship but this is often very difficult due to the travelling time involved, money, etc.

Overall there is an improvement in the way a balance is achieved between 'learning about' and 'learning from' religion. This is due to increased interest in a more creative curriculum which emphasises enquiry and thinking skills. In the majority of schools pupils are encouraged to explore the 'big' questions.

All schools in this group have some systems for assessment in place. While this often helps individual pupils to make progress it is hardly ever used to reach a judgement about overall achievement, say, at the end of a key stage. When Ofsted carry out subject inspections one of the first questions is likely to be, 'What are standards like in RE?' and most of these schools would be unable to provide a confident answer. There is sometimes an issue with recording work ('But RE is nearly all discussion..!') and schools are advised that they should be recording learning in *some* way, even if this is not always in detail.

Overall, the subject is well resourced and ICT is used effectively to enrich learning.

In the school which was re-visited the co-ordinator had effectively followed up all the suggestions made during the first visit.

Areas of strength

- Strong subject leadership backed up by effective support from the headteacher. In many of these meetings the headteacher was present for all or part of the discussion.
- Planning securely based on the agreed syllabus, but see below*.
- Positive attitudes from teachers and pupils.

Areas for development

- Continue to develop assessment by using the 8 level scale in order to make an evidence based judgement about standards and progress.
- *Ensure that the four main concepts are embedded in planning.
- Ensure pupils have first hand experiences of a range of faiths where possible, e.g. through visitors in.

Secondary Schools

Assessment throws up the same issue as in the primary schools, see above. In one school insufficient time is allocated at key stage 4 but despite this the students achieve good examination results when compared with other subjects. In the other school there is insufficient time allocated to RE at key stage 3. Both schools meet statutory requirements in ensuring that all students study RE at both key stages.

Areas of strength

- Strong subject leadership and management.
- Good balance between 'learning about' and 'learning from' religion.

Areas for development

- Increase opportunities for visits out to places of worship.
- Strengthen assessment procedures and analysis, including of examination results.

Acts of Collective Worship

All schools have daily assemblies of some kind but these could not all accurately be described as acts of collective worship, even though time is often built in for personal reflection. However, one primary school was identified by Ofsted as developing spirituality very well through assemblies and an excellent 'spirituality week.' In most primary schools there is a different type of assembly each day, e.g. a visitor on one day, a celebration assembly on another. Representatives from local churches frequently make positive contributions. In one assembly observed during the visit the singing added greatly to the spiritual experience. A time for reflection following this ensured that the children left in a calm frame of mind. Arrangements for acts of collective worship in one of the secondary schools is very rigorous and managed well by the Assistant headteacher.

Support for schools/other work

1. Training: RE for HLTAs (6 day course), RE: Children as Philosophers (1 day)

2. Support for primary co-ordinator.
3. Ongoing planning (with Diocese) for Celebrating RE day and next conference.
4. Response to paganism issue.
5. Staff meeting on developing thinking skills in RE.
6. Completion of RE topic boxes – now being trialled in schools.

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