

## **RE monitoring visits: Spring 2011**

### **Introduction**

This report is based upon visits to six schools - three primary and three secondary. The number would have been higher but four schools had to postpone the visit until this term. All three secondary schools were re-visits.

### **Primary Schools**

In two of the three schools the headteacher is the RE co-ordinator. This ensures that the subject has a relatively high profile in the school. In the third school the headteacher was present for most of the meeting and showed her strong commitment to ensuring high quality RE. All schools are using the Agreed Syllabus and meeting statutory requirements though more care needs to be given to the development of the four key concepts. In one school the recent Ofsted inspection judged pupils' spiritual development to be outstanding but the headteacher has no idea why and said it appeared to be based on the observation of one assembly. The inspection report for each school identifies community cohesion as an area of weakness. In two of the schools the RE policy is out of date and in need of review. There are good links with local churches and every effort is made to raise pupils' awareness of diversity, both locally and nationally. Assessment is an issue in all three schools. In the school where it is more effective there are still issues about the way in which it is used to track achievement and inform pupils about what they need to do to improve. It is not always clear how the 'learning from' attainment target is being covered or assessed. An example of lack of progression was seen in a sample of work where identical worksheets were being used in years 3 and 6. The co-ordinator (who is the headteacher) was unaware of this, showing a lack of systematic monitoring, linked to assessment.

Discussion with a group of pupils in one school was nothing short of inspirational, reflecting their high levels of interest in the subject and willingness to ask questions and explore profound ideas. Areas covered (mostly generated by the pupils) included, 'Does space end?', 'Why are some people bad?' and 'Where is God and who made him?'

### **Areas of strength**

- High level of support from the headteacher.
- Positive attitudes from teachers and pupils.

### **Areas for development**

- Lack of balance between the 'learning about' and 'learning from' attainment targets.
- Assessment not used effectively to bring about improvement.
- Insufficient monitoring of pupils' work.
- Insufficient focus upon the four main concepts.

### **Acts of collective worship**

One school has a policy for assemblies, rather than collective worship as the headteacher considers this to be more appropriate. This was the school

where spiritual development was judged to be outstanding. Themes are carefully planned in advance and there is a strong emphasis upon personal reflection. In another school assemblies are linked to the SEAL programme, with members of the clergy making regular contributions. An assembly was observed during one visit. This was led by the headteacher and focused on why people value certain things. Pupils responded very positively.

### **Secondary Schools**

Two schools have been working in partnership since the last visit. Initial concerns were to do with a lack of support from the headteacher and insufficient time allocation at key stage 4. There has been no improvement in these areas and statutory requirements are still not being met. Another target was to provide more opportunities for students to have first hand experiences of faiths other than Christianity. Here there has been some progress, due to the enthusiasm, hard work and commitment of one head of department. Visits out and visitors in have increased in number, including a visit to the Hindu mandir in Neasden. Assessment remains an area of concern largely due to the high number of teachers (mostly non specialists) teaching the subject. In the third school the teacher responsible for RE has no status whatever and the subject is delivered under the Humanities umbrella. She is committed to raising standards and delivers inspirational, creative RE, but with little support. It is hoped that the situation might change under the leadership and management of the recently appointed headteacher.

**Wendy Harrison**  
**May 2011**