

## Review of Religious Education (RE) in Essex schools

**St Peter's C of E (VA) Primary School**

**Address: Wigley Bush Lane, South Weald, Brentwood, Essex CM14 5QN**

**Headteacher: Iain Gunn**

**Reviewers: Andy Jones, Alison Price**

**Date of review: 19<sup>th</sup> March 2018**

### **Overall evaluation**

Religious Education at St Peter's School is highly effective because the quality of teaching is very high with a strong focus on mastery. The children are very enthusiastic about RE and clear about the impact it makes on their understanding of themselves and others. The subject leader, who is very well supported by the headteacher and governors, has excellent subject knowledge, is very clear about the importance of RE and is very keen to ensure that the quality of RE teaching and learning is high throughout the school. The school's values have a very high profile, and during both worship and lessons, there is regular and very effective reference made to them.

### **Teaching and learning in RE**

Teaching is highly effective. RE is taught very knowledgeably and with confidence. Lessons are very well structured taking account of prior learning. They are engaging and there is very clear progression from one year group to the next. On the review day, the RE focus in the four classes observed was Palm Sunday. Lessons had clear objectives understood by the children, were very well paced, and there was an excellent balance of direct teaching, using passages from the Bible, reflection, discussion and task. Children were very attentive and focussed throughout the lessons observed. Excellent questioning encouraged the children to think about and discuss the events of Palm Sunday. They considered why these events took place and how the participants in the account felt at different points. In Y6 a lively and informed discussion took place on why Jesus had to die and whose fault it was. Learning was further enhanced during worship where the children were challenged to consider what influenced the crowds to change their minds about Jesus from 'Hosanna' to 'crucify him'. This led on to a very good discussion about peer pressure. In EYFS the children thought about Jesus riding into Jerusalem on a donkey and felt that this was a humble thing to do. Humility is one of the school's values. Children have opportunities to visit a variety of centres of worship. These include a Buddhist temple, a synagogue and a mosque as well as the local Anglican Church and Chelmsford Cathedral. Children in Y6 had found the recent visit to a Buddhist temple of great interest, particularly the experience they had there of meditation. One child said, *'I found it very calming and I felt I understood myself better while meditating. I have meditated since the visit on my own.'* Children said that RE helped them to understand others better and that they better appreciate that we are all different but equal. Although children's work in books is very well marked, those we spoke to felt that they were more reliant on their own deepening understanding and ability to verbally express their thoughts and ideas in order to know how well they are doing. This very clearly demonstrates the impact of RE, the children's deepening understanding of the subject and the school's drive for mastery in RE.

### **The quality of the RE curriculum**

The quality of the RE curriculum is highly effective. It is based largely on the Chelmsford diocesan material 'Understanding Christianity'. Reference is also made to 'exploRE' and the Havering RE scheme for units on world faiths other than Christianity. There is a 70%/30% split between Christianity and other world faiths, particularly Judaism, Islam and Buddhism. The curriculum is very well structured so that each area of RE is taught within the same time-frame throughout the school. This better enables the subject leader to support teachers in their planning and for teachers to plan together. The subject leader is also better able to monitor progression which she does consistently either by lesson drop-ins or book scrutiny. The school's scheme of work is very effective providing teachers with clear guidelines to enable children to 'Make sense of the text', 'Understand the impact' and 'Make connections'.

This very effectively parallels 'Learning About' and 'Learning From' as defined in both 'Understanding Christianity' and 'exploRE'. RE is well resourced.

#### **Standards and achievement in RE**

Standards and achievement are very high in RE. The vast majority of children are at least 'on track' and are very clearly achieving Age Related Expectations. Assessment procedures are manageable, systematic and well structured enabling the subject leader to have a clear view of progress and achievement in all year groups. The high quality of children's work in books and challenging, insightful discussions in class both very clearly confirm the analysis of data undertaken by the subject leader.

#### **The leadership and management (L&M) of RE**

The leadership and management of RE is highly effective. The RE subject leader is very enthusiastic and keen to promote RE and to maintain its high profile in the school. The coherence of the RE curriculum, the delivery of RE lessons and the enthusiasm of the children all point to the successful leadership and management of RE. The RE leader is very well supported by the headteacher and senior staff. Governors, especially the vicar of the local church, are equally supportive. The high profile given to RE is particularly significant and the impact of both RE and worship serve to successfully promote the Christian ethos and values of the school both of which are very evident in the positive attitudes of the children, their excellent behaviour and the degree of empathy and understanding they display towards each other.

#### **The contribution of RE to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**

The contribution of RE to SMSC is highly effective. Both RE and worship are integral to its development. The school values which define the school's understanding of SMSC are woven into worship and RE with regular reference being made to them. It is a result of these values that behaviour is as good as it is. Children are very polite and thoughtful and conduct themselves with confidence and maturity around the school. They are sensitive to the needs of others and each year choose a particular charity for the school to support. One child spoke during worship to advertise a fund-raising initiative she and some friends were taking to raise money for Children In Need. The School Council has a clear voice in the school. As a result of requests made by council members, children now all have lockers and changing rooms have been built.

#### **Established strengths in RE**

- **The high profile given to school values and their impact through RE and worship on the day to day life of the school**
- **The very strong leadership in RE provided by the RE leader and the support she gives her colleagues**
- **Highly effective RE teaching as seen in the understanding and enthusiasm of the children**
- **The very positive willingness of the children to learn**

#### **Suggested areas for development**

- **To extend the range of other world faiths within the RE curriculum without losing the drive for mastery in a chosen small group of religions**
- **To include a unit on Humanism at some point in KS2**