

Hope Community School, Sidcup

Section 48 inspection report

This inspection was carried out under section 48 (s48) of the Education Act 2005. Inspectors have been approved by the Department for Education (DfE) and appointed by the New Generation Schools Trust (NGST) to undertake this inspection with respect to the school's designation as a school of religious character.

DfE number:	303/2041
Dates of inspection:	4 th - 5 th December 2019
Lead Inspector:	Mr Garrie-John Barnes
Team Inspector:	Mrs Yvonne Au
Age range of pupils:	4-11 years
Number on roll:	147
School type:	Free school
Religious character:	Christian
Chair of NGST:	Mr Paul Weston
Chair of School Council:	Mrs Lynn Mason
Principal:	Mrs Anne Wood
Date of previous s48 inspection:	Not previously inspected
Address:	Hope Community School 167 Rectory Lane Sidcup Kent DA15 5BU
Telephone number:	020 3223 2000
Email addresses:	enquiries@hopecommunityschool.org principal@hopecommunityschool.org

Inspection activities

As part of this section 48 inspection, inspectors undertook the following activities: Religious Education (RE) lesson observations in all seven year groups, jointly observed with the Principal and/or other members of the School Leadership Team (SLT); observations of three Collective Worship times; analysis of pupil, parent and staff questionnaires; an RE pupil book scrutiny and a learning walk focussing on displays and prayer spaces. Discussions with pupils, parents, staff, leaders, School Council members, the Chair of the NGST and local New Generation Church (NGC) leader and the school Chaplain were also held. Additionally, the school's Self-Evaluation Form, RE Action Plan and Collective Worship Policy were analysed.

KEY FINDINGS

Vision and leadership

The vision and leadership of the school are outstanding because:

- the vision of Hope Community School is compelling, coherent and relevant, vividly reflecting its local context
- the core values of adventure, creativity, excellence and openness are embodied by all leaders and School Council members
- Collective Worship is given a high priority
- the impact of leadership on standards of achievement in RE is strong
- leaders accurately evaluate standards of teaching and learning in RE, setting aspirational targets for improvement
- leaders are extremely well supported by the School Council

Collective Worship

The provision for Collective Worship is good because:

- most pupils engage well with Collective Worship
- most pupils who wish to do so take a leading role
- the impact of Collective Worship on many pupils' personal development is significant
- prayer is central to school life
- leaders have clarified the strategic purpose of Collective Worship

Religious Education

The provision for RE is good with some outstanding features because:

- most teachers use open questioning extremely effectively
- excellent working relationships exist between most teachers and their Teaching Assistants (TAs) to ensure the pupils' needs are met
- most activities are well differentiated to meet pupils' needs
- most teachers use ongoing plenaries during lessons to check for understanding and to move pupils forward
- overall, in comparison with other core subjects, more pupils are reaching higher levels of attainment in RE

TABLE OF SUMMARY JUDGEMENTS

No.	Framework	Grade	Overall grade
1	Vision and Leadership (Vision and Values)	1	1
2(a)	Collective Worship (Pupil Engagement and Understanding)	2	2
2(b)	Collective Worship (Pupil Leadership and Creativity)	2	
2(c)	Collective Worship (Impact on Personal Development and Centrality of Worship)	2	
2(d)	Collective Worship (Purpose and Planning)	2	
2(e)	Collective Worship (Quality of Leadership)	2	
3(a)	Religious Education (Engagement and Behaviour for Learning)	2	2
3(b)	Religious Education (Planning, Assessment, Subject Knowledge and Teaching Expertise)	2	
3(c)	Religious Education (Subject Status, Self-Evaluation and Leadership)	2	
	OVERALL GRADE		2

Inspection grades

Outstanding = 1

Good = 2

Requires Improvement = 3

Inadequate = 4

OVERALL JUDGEMENT

With respect to Vision and Leadership, and provision for Collective Worship and RE, Hope Community School, Sidcup is a good and improving school with some outstanding features.

Suggestions for further development

The school may wish to consider the following suggestions for its ongoing development:

1. Consider how the organisation of transitions at the beginning, middle and end of times of Collective Worship in the hall might be improved.
2. Systematically involve all pupils in the evaluation and review of Collective Worship.
3. Involve a wider range of pupils in the preparation and leadership of Collective Worship.
4. Employ a more strategic approach to the coaching and mentoring of staff in order to disseminate examples of best teaching practice in RE more widely across the school.
5. Embed the new RE assessment and tracking system to measure pupil progress over the course of a whole academic year.
6. Develop a curriculum for RE bespoke to the unique vision and values of the school.

MAIN REPORT

1. VISION AND LEADERSHIP

The vision and leadership of the school are outstanding. The core values of adventure, creativity, excellence and openness are fully embodied by the leaders themselves who, along with School Council members, passionately explain how their shared vision for the school *“to be a beacon and a centre of excellence reaching out to the most marginalised in society”* is rooted in biblical teaching.

In sustaining this vision, the Chair of the NGST, a local NGC leader, emphasises the strategic role that prayer plays in this endeavour. Numerous practical examples of how their shared vision is put into practice abound and serve to illustrate the very positive impact that their work is having on the school and wider community.

The shared leadership model employed by the Principal means that the unique vision of the school is owned by all members of the SLT. Consequently, both Assistant Principals have clear and strategic curriculum leadership roles to play in helping to manage the school.

Well supported in their professional development through a package of bespoke opportunities, the Principal represents a shining example of Christian leadership. Prior to her appointment a two-day induction was provided focussing on vision and the school's five core values; since which time the school's improvement partner, a former Headteacher and Ofsted inspector, has nurtured her development. An Education adviser, part of the NGC organisation, meets with the Principal on a termly basis to aid her understanding of what the Trust's Christian vision means in terms of the practical day-to-day running of the school.

A valuable 'working buddy' relationship has also been established with the Principal of Hope Community School, Southampton, with whom, for example, a new policy for Relationships Education has been developed. The Principal also enjoys taking part in the Bexley Headteachers' Professional Development group, having attended a recent conference with them.

The Principal's working relationship with the school's Project Director has also proved to be an invaluable source of encouragement and a constant point of reference both on a professional and spiritual level. Additional monthly meetings held with the Chair of the NGST means that the Principal is very well supported by a strong and secure network of leading professionals.

Last year, both Assistant Principals received training to support them in the strategic development of their roles as Literacy leader and Early Years Foundation Stage leader. Consequently, the leadership team is well supported and actively encouraged by the School Council to fulfil their responsibilities with a range of training and development opportunities given.

Leaders ensure Collective Worship is given a high priority. Furthermore, RE is acknowledged as a core subject with 10% timetable time allocated to its teaching.

2. COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

The quality of Collective Worship is good.

2a) Collective Worship: Pupil Engagement and Understanding

High levels of pupil engagement and understanding exist in much of the Collective Worship across the school, during times of corporate gatherings in the main hall and when pupils meet in their own classrooms. The prayer room is used effectively, and pupils also engage well with their class prayer spaces. Some pupils write prayers in class prayer books or express their appreciation for the gift of life by writing their prayers on leaves to attach to the branches of a 'Gratitude tree'.

The content of an EYFS and KS1 collective was appropriately pitched for the age and developmental stage of pupils present. Leading the assembly, the Principal made excellent use of a variety of resources including music, songs with actions, candles, stuffed toys, a cross, angel wings, and an advent calendar produced by the whole school, all of which resulted in high levels of pupil engagement and participation.

Impressively, some teachers followed the example set by the Chair of the NGST in a whole school collective where, as part of the value of the week, pupils were challenged to consider the question "*How can you make someone happy with your generosity?*". One teacher followed suit by challenging their pupils with a call to action, asking their class, "*How can we share our learning with other people?*". This led to the planning, preparation and leadership of a Christingle service in the following day's whole school collective.

Another teacher declared in their RE lesson, "*How can we action it?*" when asking pupils to consider how kindness could be put into practice. Invitations were then written to family members to attend the 'Lovely Hats' whole school collective at the end of the week.

One pupil, who was struggling to pay attention during a collective, burst into song when the music began to play. As such, Collective Worship provides opportunities for all pupils to participate. Consequently, most pupils engage with some aspect of Collective Worship because adults work hard to make the outworking of faith an exciting and tangible experience for all.

2b) Collective Worship: Pupil Leadership and Creativity

Generally, pupils who wish to do so take a leading role in a wide range of Collective Worship activities. Overseen by a member of the leadership team, some pupils plan, prepare, deliver and evaluate Collective Worship through their active involvement in three pupil elected groups: Earth Matters, Pupil Parliament and The Lighthouse Group.

The school documents an impressive portfolio of Collective Worship, recording many key milestones in the life of the school such as the recent Remembrance collective, which some pupils helped to plan and lead. All pupils made poppies and individually pinned them to a cross, after which Year 6 pupils invited everyone to reflect before the observance of two

minutes' silence. A 'Switch Off Fortnight' collective was also planned in the same way to raise awareness of how the school could adopt a more environmentally friendly lifestyle. Pupils take responsibility for the hall computer, operating slides for PowerPoint presentations and words for songs and accompanying music with which, generally, most pupils happily join in.

Whole classes sometimes help plan and prepare assemblies. Following the production of Christingles in their RE lesson the previous day, Year 4 accepted the challenge of their teacher to prepare and present a Key Stage 2 collective in less than an hour. Effectively supported by their teacher to maintain pace and clarity of meaning, pupils presented themselves well, actively involving their peers.

Although observed as timid at first, presenters explained the meaning of the Christingle ritual using PowerPoint slides, engaged their peers by asking questions, as well as offering a time of reflection enhanced by the lighting of Christingle candles. Appropriately selected music also helped to set the tone and create a contemplative atmosphere which clearly impacted all who were present.

Gaining in confidence, pupils then led a well-presented closing chorus prayer as everyone listened attentively. When standing to their feet at the end of the assembly to join in with the closing song, most pupils were too noisy, detracting from the thoughtful atmosphere created. The seating arrangement also meant that a large gap existed between Year 6 at the back of the hall and other pupils, diminishing the sense of unity. Positively, as pupils were leaving the hall, the class teacher spent some time giving their class some well-deserved encouraging feedback. This experience consolidated their learning from the previous day's lesson and one pupil announced, *"That was fun!"*.

Commendably, pupils are generally very tolerant of their peers during collectives, some of whom have behavioural difficulties and require additional support. In this way, as well as pupils leading well from the front, pupils sat on the floor lead by their good example.

2c) Collective Worship: Impact on Personal Development and Centrality of Worship

The culture of worship and prayer lying at the heart of the school has a positive impact on many pupils' lives. Most pupils enjoy times of Collective Worship and prayer, with some prizing them very highly. One pupil explained in their questionnaire, *"I find that when I pray and worship, I feel happier and I feel like a weight has been lifted off my shoulders"*.

Although some pupils sometimes find it difficult to concentrate during class collectives, due to distractions from their peers, encouragingly, opportunities for quiet reflection abound. Pupils often feel calm and peaceful during such times. Consequently, many pupils are developing spiritually as their Christian faith is nourished. One pupil said, *"I find that if I pray it calms me down, I can get a connection with God and it makes all stress go out of me"*. Pupils of all faiths and of none are openly welcomed into the school community. Whilst some choose not to actively engage in collectives, preferring instead to quietly reflect, most are keen to show their respect for the school's Christian ethos. One pupil said, *"I'm not Christian."*

However, I think it makes people feel happy”, whilst another emphasised, “Honestly, I don’t find it helpful, but I like some of the songs to get me through the day”.

One parent explained that times of Collective Worship have given their child *“confidence and permission to express their faith with freedom”*. The impact of this in most pupils’ lives is expressed through the care and respect they show for one another and their generally good behaviour in lessons and at breaktimes.

Prayer is central to school life. Pupils and staff pray in a variety of creative ways and in a range of contexts. Pupils’ spiritual development is fostered through many planned opportunities for reflection, with teachers of all faiths and none inviting them to consider deeply profound ideas and themes. Such opportunities are provided through well-resourced prayer spaces in every classroom. Displays in these areas are child-initiated and interactive, and pupils of all ages and abilities can clearly articulate how these resources are used.

A prayer room offers another welcoming focal point for prayer and reflection; a facility greatly appreciated by pupils, staff and parents alike. Pupils’ reflective journals provide further opportunities for self-expression, alongside prayers made during class collectives.

The Lighthouse Group, led by pupils and overseen by a member of the SLT, provides opportunities for Christian pupils to independently explore and build their faith as well as welcoming any pupils who wish to find out what a relationship with God means in practice.

Consequently, due to the considerable levels of pupil involvement and engagement, confidence and self-esteem have been built. This has helped many pupils to develop spiritually.

Many staff meet at the start of the day to pray, also using WhatsApp so everyone can join in. They believe prayer is an ideal way to prepare for the day and that it makes a difference because they feel supported. One teacher said, *“Everyone is very open about things whether of faith or not”*, emphasising the mutual respect and care that staff have for each other. Another remarked that, *“We’re a close-knit team so we know who needs support”*.

Representing several local churches, parents meet a few times each month to pray as well as using a virtual prayer group via WhatsApp. They believe God answers prayer and want him involved in the life of the school *“because it’s not one person’s idea but God’s idea”*, expressing their sense of ownership and allegiance to the community of the school. Parents in this group were pleased with the impact the school was having on their children. When asked exactly how happy they were with the school one parent said, *“I’m in between happy and very happy”*.

Arranged by the NGC, and clearly valued by the school community, ‘Lark in the Park’ attracts approximately 35 school families as guests. A further 15 school families volunteered earlier this year to help run this major local church organised fun day event. This level of involvement highlights the growing relationship between the school, parents and the church.

Teachers’ innovative approaches to promote the school values have a positive impact on most of their pupils’ spiritual, moral and social development. For example, in one class, to

promote generosity, pupils are encouraged to write notes to recommend one of their peers they think should receive a packet of Smarties. The recipient then repeats the process, suggesting another pupil they think is worthy of the same prize.

Similarly, in another class a 'special person of the week' is nominated with pupils taking turns to write positive comments about one of their classmates. These notes are then attached to the frame of a photo of the named pupil. One child said poignantly, *"Even people who don't like me wrote nice things about me. It made me feel happy and helped me and helped me feel different about them"*.

These values surface in all areas of school life. In a Year 6 mathematics lesson pupils were shown a video clip of Chinese gymnasts in training. Despite countless errors when attempting complex manoeuvres, the gymnasts persevered and eventually mastered the skills they were practising. The teacher cleverly personalised the message of this YouTube clip to inspire their pupils to persist with their numeracy work.

In this way, the school's values serve as a golden thread running through all aspects of its community life, fostering pupils' spiritual, moral and social development.

2d) Collective Worship: Purpose and Planning

Leaders have clarified the strategic purpose of Collective Worship in the school action plan which is to ensure that children have "the best possible experience to engage with God". Consequently, embedded in the school's two-year programme of 40 core values, themes are carefully planned to run alongside the Christian liturgical calendar. Hence, biblical teaching forms a sound foundation for all collectives, as well as being informed by topical events and key festivals from other world religions such as Diwali and Sukkot. This represents outstanding practice and good progress is being made towards reaching this goal.

As part of this process, planning is regularly monitored by the leadership team to ensure that priority is given to Christ-centred worship. This is especially proven during more pressured times of the school year: when SATs and phonics testing take place, the school still gathers for worship to acknowledge the Principal's deep conviction that *"this is God's school!"*. Although some feedback suggests that resources are not as well maintained as they could be which sometimes impacts the quality of Collective Worship; for example, the poor state of repair of the hall sound equipment.

Opportunities are planned for in a way that attracts and facilitates attendance of Collective Worship by parents and other adults associated with the school. There is a standing invitation for all families to attend the 'Lovely Hats' Friday collective as well as being invited to class and special event collectives. These occasions are greatly appreciated by most parents, one of whom said, *"I attend 'Lovely Hats' sometimes and love the way the children are honoured for who they are and the contribution they make"*.

Parents also play a key role in leading reflections at the start of the day. This has had a positive impact on most pupils' spiritual life. Pupils settle well and listen attentively, benefitting from a wide range of perspectives on the relevance of the Christian faith to daily

living. After a minute's silence in one reflection, pupils prayed thoughtful prayers in keeping with the theme of generosity. In another class, in response to suggestions for expressing this value, one pupil suggested, "*If we were too old for a toy we had, we could give them away*", highlighting the positive impact that the values taught in these sessions have had.

2e) Collective Worship: Quality of Leadership

Invitational approaches adopted by all leaders provide multiple opportunities for pupils who wish to do so to participate in times of Collective Worship. Adults lead with energy and humour, interacting well with all pupils. Consequently, pupils of faith and of no faith can participate by reflecting in their own way on chosen themes. This is true both for classroom-based times of reflection and for corporate gatherings where the whole school or departments assemble. For pupils whose parents do not wish them to attend times of Collective Worship on religious grounds, good provision is made.

Attention should be given to the organisation of transitions at the beginning, middle and end of times of Collective Worship in the hall. On one occasion, Key Stage 2 pupils had to queue for a long time outside, whilst waiting for Key Stage 1 pupils to exit, then entering the hall too noisily and taking too long to settle. Similarly, noise levels detract from the thoughtful atmospheres created in Collective Worship as pupils leave the hall. The youngest pupils also have the longest to wait at the end of a collective as they sit at the front.

Leaders creatively encourage corporate prayer, for example inviting pupils to cup their hands to symbolise receiving from God or through invitations to join in with repeating refrains in chorus prayers. Pupils will also respond with heads bowed in reverence or with eyes open, focussing on lit candles or an image or cross at the front of the hall.

Links with the wider community are promoted by leaders as a result of which the school has received a regional award from The Faith and Belief Forum.

The volunteer Chaplain sensitively joins in with prayer times for staff and parents, leading Collective Worship every Tuesday as well as attending the 'Lovely Hats' celebrations on Fridays. He leads sessions in the school prayer room too. He works hard to build the trust of all families within the school community. Although still "*early days*", the volunteer Chaplain expresses excitement about the positive impact these activities are having and is looking forward to the creation of a spiritual garden for Key Stage 1 in Spring 2020. This will provide individuals with a quiet outdoor space to be still, reflect, pray or worship.

The leadership team aim to improve provision for Collective Worship at every opportunity, as shown by their detailed action plan.

3. RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Provision for RE is good with many outstanding features.

3a) Religious Education: Engagement and Behaviour for Learning

Behaviour in most lessons is generally good and skilfully managed by staff. An exception was in one lesson where poor pupil attention and engagement was largely ignored by the teacher.

Excellent working relationships exist between teachers, TAs and additional adult volunteers. As a result, the requirements of pupils with additional needs are extremely well met. When pupils are distracted or their attention wanes they are quickly and sensitively brought back on track, highlighting the outstanding pastoral care given to them.

A wide range of effective classroom management strategies are employed to sustain pupils' interest and concentration during teacher explanations and lesson introductions. One teacher often whispered to their class, capturing their attention whilst creating a calm and reassuring atmosphere in the classroom. Coming into school after playtime some disruptive behaviour was very effectively dealt with by the same teacher. Upset pupils were given space to calm down and conflicts resolved in line with school policy.

Pupils in most classes work together extremely well, collaborating effectively on set tasks, supporting one another to achieve specific learning outcomes. RE lessons are fun with an appropriate amount of good humour being used to engage pupils and sustain their interest. In one lesson where pupils learned about the differences between signs and symbols, the teacher, with perfect comic timing, flashed a Batman symbol on the screen following a serious discussion. This lightened the mood and brought the whole class together in laughter.

In another lesson, after studying symbols from major world religions, pupils created their own symbols and explained their meaning. A wealth of imaginative ideas and insightful explanations were produced. Pupils drew and annotated ladders, spirals, hearts, mathematical symbols and journeys. As a result, because teachers often provide pupils with rich opportunities for independent and critical thinking, lessons are often engaging. One pupil grouped three hearts together and drew another in a corner, stating that no matter what, *"families have to stick together and not be apart"*. Staff work hard in this school, pupils enjoy their learning, and many are rightly proud of their efforts. At the end of one lesson, a teacher exclaimed, *"I have a class full of knowledge and I am so happy!"*.

Overall, due to the range of engaging and differentiated activities provided and the skilful way in which many lessons are taught, most pupils remain on task for most of the time. A hallmark of less effective lessons was lower pupil engagement and concentration resulting in some pupils distracting their peers.

Due to the extent of adult support and the use of paired work it is not apparent if pupils in some classes are able to sustain their work independently and remain on task for extended periods.

Staff should be more selective in their use of background music as this sometimes detracts from pupils' learning during front-led class discussions. Some pupils were observed singing along to the music rather than listening to instructions.

In most lessons, teachers' use of high-quality resources and creative teaching skills means that pupils of all ages and abilities are often fully engaged in their learning. In one lesson, the exuberance and joy of the teacher was so infectious, their pupils were entranced by the quality of their storytelling. Consequently, as Bible verses depicting the Magi coming to bring their gifts to Jesus were brought to life by the teacher, pupils showed a high degree of understanding of their symbolic meaning.

3b) Religious Education: Planning, Assessment, Subject Knowledge and Teaching Expertise

The Locally Agreed RE Syllabus for Bexley is followed and, in conjunction with the core values of school, this is used to make detailed curriculum plans for teaching RE at curriculum development days and staff meetings. On the school's long-term plan, RE and Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) are interlinked with a compendium of 40 school values, 20 of which are taught each year on a rolling fortnightly programme. Consequently, Christian values are integrated across the whole school curriculum in all subjects.

Good intent and implementation of RE related sessions are evident in all year groups. Pupils' books show evidence of appropriate planning and implementation of focussed learning activities across year groups, building on pupils' previous knowledge and understanding. Therefore, all lessons are imbued with the values of the school.

Pupils' theological understanding of the Bible is often deepened age appropriately and according to ability. In one lesson, where a class was making Christingles, thoughtful responses were provoked from pupils as they reconstructed a key Bible verse about Jesus being 'the light of the world' by unscrambling words and putting them in the right order. Using opportunities this activity afforded, the teacher invited interpretations of the symbolic nature of the allegorical painting 'The Light of the World' by William Holman Hunt.

The teacher's skilful use of open questioning provided pupils with plenty of time for individual reflection followed by discussion with their 'talk partner'. Pupils' imaginations were fuelled, leading to enthusiastic and intelligent discussion with the teacher about the symbolic meaning of the artwork. Several pupils responded with profound insights into the nature of God. Observing the haloed figure of Jesus standing at a door and holding a lantern, one pupil remarked insightfully, *"Is what He's carrying the light that he has?"*.

Reflective responses were common to pupils in most, but not all classes. In a few lessons, reflections were cut short. Pupils were not given enough thinking time to respond to questions as teachers appeared too keen to rush ahead. Some staff also spent too much time on lengthy adult-led explanations or unnecessarily recapping previous lessons which meant learning objectives were unclear, and some pupils became restless and switched off. Excessive use of closed questioning was also observed on one occasion limiting some

pupils' ability to provide meaningful answers. Such practice will benefit from coaching approaches.

Most teachers embraced pupils' incorrect answers to questions sensitively so that pupils felt that their contributions were valued. Targeted praise was often used in lessons to build pupils' confidence by them receiving 'dojo points' or other rewards. Nonetheless, staff should be clear why they are praising pupils when giving them feedback as this was not always the case.

Most teachers' strong RE subject knowledge meant that most lessons were very interesting. Detailed knowledge of individual pupils' level of ability was also used to craft differentiated activities in most year groups, enabling pupils to access the planned curriculum and make good progress in lessons. For example, in one lesson the accounts of Jesus' birth in the gospels of Matthew and Luke were compared to identify similarities and differences. A wide range of interesting resources with different levels of textual complexity and illustrations were provided by the teacher to facilitate this. Therefore, the learning of all pupils in the class was deepened and extended.

Teachers commonly take every opportunity to extend pupils' vocabulary, for example in one class synonyms for the three 'kings' in the gospel account of Jesus' birth (including wise men and Magi) were explained in fine detail. In some lessons no immediate corrections were given to younger pupils' incorrect use of language which meant opportunities for learning were missed.

Pupils enjoy learning about major world religions other than Christianity and are knowledgeable about the key beliefs of Buddhism. In the most effective lessons, innovative resources were used exceptionally well by teachers as springboards for learning; for example, a treasure box with a statue of Buddha hidden inside was used very effectively to arouse pupils' curiosity and captivate their imaginations prior to teaching about Buddhism. Staff do need to ensure that everything they need for lessons is prepared in advance as on one occasion valuable lesson time was lost in finding artefacts they required.

Respect for other religions and their followers is actively promoted by all staff. For instance, in one lesson a Buddhist parent was present to speak to the pupils about their religion and answer questions. They reported that they, and their own children, were very happy in the school because their religion was respected by all and that they had been warmly welcomed by the Principal. A member of staff, overjoyed, also declared, "*I am a Hindu lady, teaching Islam in a Christian school. I have goose bumps going up my arm!*". Therefore, whilst maintaining its distinctive Christian character, an all-inclusive and diverse culture exists at the heart of the school, due mainly to the approach adopted by staff and school leaders at all levels and especially modelled by the Principal.

Colourful, well-illustrated and informative interactive whiteboard presentations were used to introduce lessons, transmit new knowledge, record ideas generated by the class, annotate text digitally, provide clear instructions and invite responses to stimulating questions.

Most teachers' use of such quality resources, coupled with their skilful questioning, often inspired pupils to reflect deeply and make thoughtful responses about the meaning of

religious symbols; for example, one pupil said that a lion was an appropriate symbol for a king because "*Lions have a little bit of royalty in them*".

Most teachers took time at key moments in lessons to pause and reflect with their pupils. Progress towards learning outcomes was considered with pupils of all abilities making valuable contributions to discussions. Teachers showed examples of good work to the rest of the class and praised individual achievement and effort. These intervals were also used by teachers to question pupils and check understanding. This served to motivate pupils and enrich their learning.

3c) Religious Education: Subject Status, Self-Evaluation and Leadership

Leaders accord RE the status of a core subject allocating 10% of the timetable to RE and PSHE lessons. Leaders acknowledge that this year, after taking a much firmer grip of the RE curriculum, pupils are now starting to make good progress.

The SLT is to be commended for the production of an action plan covering all aspects of RE and Collective Worship in the school for the current academic year. This plan outlines the part the SLT play leading inset day training, undertaking book scrutinies, lesson observations and learning walks. It has been recently updated to show progress made since the beginning of term. Outcomes from their effective monitoring and evaluation regime are being used to inform future actions. This more proactive approach from the SLT is clearly having a positive effect on pupils' learning.

The action plan would be further enhanced through ensuring a more robust timescale with specific dates identified for targets to be met rather than relying on general references to Autumn and Spring terms.

Positively, as a result of this plan, named leaders have checked teachers' planning and observed lessons since the start of term. Consequently, all members of the SLT have a very clear understanding of all teachers' strengths and weaknesses and clear targets for improvement have been identified.

This became evident during several discussions held with leaders after jointly observing lessons throughout the inspection. At the request of the Principal, all lessons were jointly observed - further evidence of their commitment to maximise the potential for pupils' spiritual and moral development in RE and through all aspects of Collective Worship.

Individual pupil books in most classes indicate that learning objectives have been met and that 'steps to success' have been achieved. 'I can' statements are dated and highlighted to illustrate progress of individual pupils. Pupils have also started to self-assess their work and make helpful evaluative comments before their books are marked.

Based on data for the first term of this academic year, the new 'Target Tracker' RE assessment system shows that many pupils across the school are currently at least working within their expected age-related levels. However, as this assessment system is new, it has not yet been possible to measure their progress over the course of a full academic year.

Nevertheless, in comparison to data supplied by the school for Reading, Writing and Mathematics, in most classes, most pupils are reaching considerably higher levels of attainment in RE.

Leaders account for this by explaining that RE may be assessed verbally, as well as drawing on a range of different creative media such as art and drama. Therefore, as RE is not wholly reliant on extended pieces of written work, pupils often express their ideas in a variety of creative ways, engaging more readily with the RE curriculum than was previously the case. Encouragingly, families reported at a recent Parents' evening that they appreciate the extra data they now receive about the progress their children are making in RE.