

Report to Wokingham SACRE on Ofsted School Inspections for the academic year 2022-2023

As a SACRE, we monitor Ofsted reports for any comments about, or relating to, Religious Education and collective worship. The total number of Wokingham's schools inspected in the academic year 2022-2023 was 15. This breaks down as:

- 8 primary schools
- 2 junior schools
- 3 secondary schools
- 1 pupil referral unit
- 1 special school

Two of the primary schools and one of the junior schools inspected are designated as having a religious character (one primary school and one junior school is Church of England, and one primary school is Roman Catholic). SACRE is not obliged to report on Religious Education or collective worship in schools with a religious character. However, these schools are invited to participate in all of the support provided by the Wokingham SACRE, so it seems appropriate to include these schools in our monitoring of inspection reports.

Findings

There were no 'deep dives' into Religious Education in any of the schools inspected. Two of the inspection reports mention Religious Education or refer to learning closely connected to Religious Education. Both references were made in relation to primary schools:

Reference 1:

"Several pupils have given inspiring talks about their experiences with their additional needs, such as autism or having a stammer. Others have helped to develop understanding and appreciation for their faith or country of origin".

Reference 2:

"Inspectors met with leaders to discuss the curriculum and review pupils' work in design and technology, art and design and religious education."

A further comment made by inspectors at this primary school may relate to RE:

"Currently, a handful of foundation subjects are timetabled for very short blocks of time within the school year, sometimes for no more than one or two weeks at a time. This means that there are very long gaps of time between pupils' experiences of these subjects. Consequently, some pupils find it difficult to reconnect with or recall previous learning. As a result, they are not building their knowledge securely or deeply enough in these subjects. Leaders need to review their current arrangements for the implementation and timetabling of the foundation subjects to address this."

None of the inspection reports indicate non-compliance in terms of statutory requirements in relation to Religious Education or Collective worship.

COMPARISON WITH PREVIOUS YEAR (2021-2022)

During the academic year 2021-2022, a total of 16 Wokingham schools were inspected by Ofsted:

- 14 primary schools (**)
- 1 secondary school

- 1 maintained nursery

** Four of the primary schools that were inspected are Church of England schools, so Ofsted does not inspect RE or collective worship in these schools.

There were no 'deep dives' into Religious Education, although for this year there were no full inspections.

However, in contrast to the current academic year, there was more detailed reference to Religious Education and collective worship.

7 inspection reports mentioned RE or referred to learning closely connected to RE. Most mention of RE was positive.

2 comments highlighted the need for better planned provision for RE, alongside other subjects in the curriculum.

None of the inspection reports indicate non-compliance in terms of Religious Education or collective worship.

Comments relating to Religious Education included:

"Pupils benefit from carefully planned opportunities to study different cultures and religions." "The curriculum promotes topics that capture the imagination of pupils and inspire creativity. Teachers plan topics carefully so that pupils can link different areas of learning. For example, in art, pupils make Diya lamps to link with their religious education study of Diwali. Learning is sequenced across the curriculum so that pupils learn the right skills and knowledge in the right order" "Pupils enjoy the chance to learn about, and celebrate, difference... Pupils are fascinated by different lifestyles and religions".

"Leaders make sure that pupils learn about different cultures and religions." "Speakers visit to talk to children about different cultures and faiths, and children learn about festivals, such as Diwali and Christmas."

Two reports mention collective worship, and both in a positive light:

"The provision for pupils' personal development is shaped by the school's values. These values, including ownership, determination, kindness and self-belief, are woven through lessons and assemblies."

"The daily collective worship provides an opportunity for pupils to explore topical issues around equality. They are encouraged to reflect on the school's values, including this term's focus on 'thankfulness'. This is demonstrated in the prayers that the pupils write and share with the school community." (Report for a Church of England School)

SUMMARY

In spite of the fact that a similar number of schools were inspected in both academic years, in 2022-2023 there has been less mention by Ofsted of RE. Whereas collective worship was mentioned in 2 inspection reports in 2021-2022, Ofsted have made no mention at all of collective worship in the academic year 2022-2023.

CONCLUSION

SACRE may wish to consider writing to Hazel Henson, Acting Subject Lead for RE at Ofsted, to put forward concerns about the apparent lack of reporting into RE and collective worship in Wokingham's schools.