

NASACRE BRIEFING PAPER

HMI SUBJECT INSPECTIONS

As well as conducting full school inspections, Ofsted carries out subject and thematic inspections.

HMI and, where needed, Additional Inspectors (AIs) inspect each subject in 30 primary and 30 secondary schools every year. These inspections are followed up with a letter to the head teacher copied to the LA. Letters to the LA following RE inspections recommend that they be copied to SACRE.

Each year the subject inspection has a focus. In the last two years we have focused on the achievement of boys in RE and more recently the effective use of discussion to promote learning.

The outcomes of the inspection of boys' achievement in brief, were that:

- Boys generally enjoy RE as a subject but do not achieve as well as girls
- Boys underachieve particularly when teaching is didactic, resources are unvaried and tasks invariably involve writing for the sake of recording. They particularly dislike copying, note-taking and filling in worksheets.
- Boys achieve well where teaching methods are varied, resources include a strong emphasis on the visual and where tasks involve discussion and creativity.
- Girls have similar dislikes and preferences but are more ready to tolerate unpopular teaching and learning methods.

The outcomes of the inspection of the effective use of discussion are currently being analysed.

Later this year Ofsted will publish a series of long subject reports, including one on RE with the working title 'RE for the 21st Century'. This report will consider priorities for the development of the subject in the light of evidence from Ofsted and other sources over the past decade. In preparation for this paper we will be focusing our inspection this term on the impact of the non-statutory National Framework on agreed syllabuses and indirectly on schools. To this end we will be inspecting RE in a few schools in:

- Lancashire
- North East Lincolnshire
- Bournemouth
- Dorset
- Southwark
- Cornwall

HMI will be contacting chairs of national RE associations, including NASACRE, to discuss what in their view has had the most positive and negative impact on RE in recent years and what could best be done to take the subject forward. We look forward to hearing your views on this.