ANGUS COUNCIL

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

30 APRIL 2002

STANDARDS AND QUALITY IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS: RELIGIOUS AND MORAL EDUCATION
1995-2000 – A REPORT BY HM INSPECTORATE OF EDUCATION

REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

**ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this report is to seek the Education Committee's approval of proposals to take forward in
Angus schools the recommendations made by HM Inspectors in the RME Standards and Quality Report.

## 1 RECOMMENDATIONS

1.1 It is recommended that the Education Committee:

(a) notes the terms of this report, and the summary of the HMIE findings on Religious and Moral
Education across Scottish schools, contained within the body of this report and the enclosed
Appendix;

(b) notes and approves the detailed proposals for action outlined in Section 5 of the attached
commentary; these proposals have been framed in the course of meetings with Principal
Teachers of Religious and Moral Education;

(c) notes the terms of the special note on religious observance which HMIE have included in the
Standards and Quality Report.

## 2 BACKGROUND

2.1 "Standards and Quality in Secondary Schools: Religious and Moral Education 1995-2000" was
published by HM Inspectorate of Education in August 2001. The report identifies a number of
strengths in the learning and teaching of Religious and Moral Education (RME), especially in courses
leading to external certification. However, in keeping with practice in similar reports in other subject
areas, the report has identified main areas for improvement.

2.2 The areas for improvement identified relate to the need to:

- improve planning of S1/S2 courses to incorporate breadth, balance and opportunities for pupils to
reflect on and evaluate religious issues and views
- improve planning of S3 to S6 courses to place more emphasis on deeper understanding of
religious and moral concepts, evaluative skills and recall of prior learning
- ensure adequate time, staff and resources to allow good RME courses to operate
- seek to meet pupils' needs more effectively, by setting higher expectations and teaching at a
brisker pace
- provide better support to non-specialist RME teachers
- improve quality assurance by Principal Teachers and senior managers with a view to improving
learning, teaching, assessment and planning

2.3 In taking forward the action plan proposals detailed in Section 5 of the attached report, Angus schools
will build on the national and local support and advice detailed in sections 3 and 4 respectively of the
action plan.

## 3 RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE

**3.1** While the report does not evaluate religious observance, HMIE believed it necessary to provide updated advice and have, therefore, included within the report a "special note on religious observance" which immediately follows the foreword to the report. The key thrusts of that advice are expressed as follows:

**3.2** "The good practice which HMI have seen argues strongly for finding a place in all non-denominational schools for bringing pupils together as a community on a regular basis and **for using these occasions to encourage young people to consider the spiritual dimension of their personal development, to reflect on individual spiritual and moral values of their own and to express and celebrate the shared values of school, family, community and society.** There may also be a place around the school day for additional voluntary opportunities to take part in acts of worship specifically for Christian denominations or, as appropriate, for other faiths.

**3.3** It is clear that the potential contribution of religious observance to the all-round development of young people in many of our secondary schools is not being realised under the present arrangements. This is a matter which is of interest to many different groups, including pupils and parents, who will all have important contributions to make to consideration of how arrangements for religious observance may be improved."

**3.4** The advice of HMIE is perfectly compatible with extant guidance made available to Angus Secondary Schools in the form of two policy documents, "Policy on Religious Education and Religious Observance" [TRC, August 1991] and Policy Statement on Religious and Moral Education (5-14) [TRC, 1995].

**4 CONCLUSION**

The Education Committee is asked to approve the action proposals In the attached report and to note the advice offered by HMIE in respect of religious observance. I am confident that the action plan now drawn up will assist Angus schools to respond effectively to HMIE recommendations in relation to the curriculum and to religious observance.

**5 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

Any costs arising from the attached action plan proposals will be contained within the Department's Revenue Budget.

**6 HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS**

There are no human rights implications arising directly from this report.

**7 CONSULTATION**

The Chief Executive, the Director of Law and Administration and the Director of Finance have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

The Religious and Moral Education Curriculum Advisory Group has been closely consulted in the preparation of the action proposals attached to this Committee Report.

JIM ANDERSON
DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

**BACKGROUND PAPERS**

No background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to any material extent in preparing the above report.

NL/AR

**"STANDARDS AND QUALITY IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS 1995-2000:**
**RELIGIOUS AND MORAL EDUCATION" (HMIE AUGUST 2001)**

**COMMENTARY AND PROPOSED FOLLOW-UP ACTION PLAN**

**1      Background**

1.1     "Standards and Quality in Secondary Schools 1995-2000: Religious and Moral Education was published by HMIE in August 2001. This report was the seventh in a series of Standards and Quality reports dealing with individual subjects in the secondary school.

1.2     The evidence for the analyses, conclusions and recommendations was obtained from evaluations based on published performance indicators deployed by HMIE in 76 inspections of RME departments. Two of the schools involved were Montrose Academy and Webster's High School.

1.3     The report identifies successes in RME but also identifies significant weaknesses in courses, particularly in S1/2 and in non-certificated 'core RE' courses. To address these weaknesses it is necessary to ensure adequate time, staff and resources to allow good RME courses to operate. It is also recommended that principal teachers improve planning to place more emphasis on deeper understanding of religious and moral concepts, evaluative skills and recall of prior learning and to meet pupil needs more effectively, setting higher expectations and teaching at a brisker pace and improve quality assurance procedures.

1.4     Identified strengths and development needs have been referred to under the following headings:

- The Curriculum
- Standards and Attainment
- Quality of Learning and Teaching
- Ethos
- Resources
- Management of Quality Assurance

1.5     In November 2001 Angus Council's Curriculum Advisory Group for RME was invited to comment on the RME Standards and Quality Report.

1.6     The views of the CAG have been sought in producing this final draft Council Action Plan.

**2      Summary of the HMIE's findings**

2.1     The Curriculum and the Quality of Learning and Teaching

2.1.1   Circular 6/91 underlined the fundamental place of religious education in Scottish schools and advised a minimum time of 5% of curriculum time in S1and S2, a minimum of 80 hours over

two years in S3 and S4 and a continuing element within the personal and social development programme in S5 and S6.

2.1.2    While this report does not evaluate religious observance, it nevertheless provides immediately after the foreword a "special note on religious observance" which seeks to take account of sensitive issues surrounding religious observance.  The strong advice offered by HMIE expressed in the following terms:

"The good practice which HMI have seen argues strongly for finding a place in all non-denominational schools for bringing pupils together as a community on a regular basis and for using these occasions to encourage young people to consider the spiritual dimension of their personal development, to reflect on individual spiritual and moral values of their own and to express and celebrate the shared values of school, family, community and society. There may also be a place around the school day for additional voluntary opportunities to take part in acts of worship specifically for Christian denominations or, as appropriate, for other faiths".

"It is clear that the potential contribution of religious observance to the all-round development of young people in many of our secondary schools is not being realised under the present arrangements.  This is a matter which is of interest to many different groups, including pupils and parents, who will all have important contributions to make to consideration of how arrangements for religious observance may be improved."

The above advice is perfectly compatible with extant guidance issued to Angus schools in the form of a policy document, "Policy on Religious Education and Religious Observance" [TRC, August 1991] and "Policy Statement on Religious and Moral Education (5-14) [TRC, 1995]

2.1.3    About half of schools gave less than the advised time to RME and while 60% of S1/2 courses were good or very good, the other 40% showed important weaknesses or were unsatisfactory. The limited time allocation meant that the courses lacked balance, breadth and depth. Many S1/2 courses did not make effective provision for 'personal search', and generally consisted of a series of units providing little progression or coherence. Too little account was taken of prior learning leading to a lack of continuity between primary and secondary.

2.1.4    In S3/4 around 2% of pupils were presented at Standard Grade while 40% follow SQA Short Courses as core RME provision. Similar weaknesses to those in S1/2 are present in S3/4 where there is insufficient emphasis on deeper understanding of religious and moral concepts, evaluative skills and recall of prior learning.

2.1.5    In S5/6 around 2% of pupils were presented for Higher or National Qualifications.

2.1.6    In all provision post S2, courses leading to certification were well planned and good whereas most other courses showed important weaknesses.

2.1.7    The quality of pupils' learning was good or very good in 60% of the schools inspected across S1 – S6. There were important weaknesses in 30% and 10% were unsatisfactory where RME was not provided for all pupils. Certificate work was good while there were important weaknesses in 30% of other courses.

2.1.8    The quality of teaching was good or very good in 80% of departments with important weaknesses in the remaining 20%.

2.1.9    Assessment as part of learning was good or very good in 70% of departments, with important weaknesses in the remaining 30%.

2.1.10   Overall, in meeting pupils' needs, there were important weaknesses in 45% of departments. Pupils were often poorly motivated in non-certificated courses. In S1/2 there were important weaknesses in 65% of departments.  These included:

- Tasks not well matched to pupils' needs
- Lack of pace in learning and teaching

- Low expectation of what pupils could achieve
- Inadequate support for less able pupils

2.2    Standards of Attainment

2.2.1    Taking into account national 5-14 attainment levels, and other factors related to meeting pupils' needs in learning, the overall standard of pupils' attainment at S1/2 was judged to be good or very good in only 50% of departments. Elsewhere there were important weaknesses.

2.2.2    Areas set out for improved attainment at S1/2 are:

- better recall of aspects studied earlier in the course
- the development of analytical and evaluative skills
- deeper knowledge and understanding of the major beliefs of the religions studied
- better standards of written work which would serve as a useful record of work for assessment and revision purposes.

2.2.3    The overall quality of attainment at S3/4, taking into account a range of factors including comparison of examination performance with national averages and with the performance of pupils in their other subjects in the school, was very good in only 5% of departments, had more strengths than weaknesses in 45% and showed important weaknesses in 50%.

2.2.4    Improvement at S3/4 could be made in the following:

- awareness of concepts underpinning the course
- retention of previously learned knowledge and understanding
- demonstration of knowledge, understanding and evaluation skills in investigations.

2.2.5    In judging overall quality of attainment at S5/6 the majority of courses were good or very good, with important weaknesses in 10-20% of courses, depending on whether or not they were certificated.

2.2.6    Main areas for improving pupils' attainment in S5/6 included:

- deeper understanding of religious and moral concepts
- critical analysis of issues and concepts as part of essay writing, especially at Higher
- capacity to form and justify personal conclusions about religious and moral issues using valid arguments.

2.3    Resources

2.3.1    Accommodation and facilities were generally very good although there were important weaknesses in 20% of departments. Among the main weaknesses were:

- classrooms being used for storage as well as teaching
- staff teaching in different rooms, creating difficulties with transporting and accessing resources.

2.3.2    Most schools showed more strengths than weaknesses although 30% had important weaknesses. Weaknesses frequently related to limitations with textbooks, materials, availability of artefacts or up-to-date ICT. or software.

2.3.3    The majority of departments used available resources and facilities well. However, in 20% of departments there was significant scope for improvement. Effective departments made good use of other staff, visitors, visits and libraries.

2.3.4    80% of staff were effective and committed to the subject. Most weaknesses occurred where non-specialist staff were used. Learning support staff were increasingly used to help design courses to meet the needs of all pupils.

2.3.5    Professional review had only taken place in approximately 20% of departments (mainly principal teachers). Involvement in Higher Still initiatives had provided opportunities for staff development. However, many departments did not identify clear development needs for specialist and non-specialist staff.

2.3.6    Good staff development featured:

- Effective use of departmental meetings to meet development priorities;
- Appropriate provision for the needs of non-specialist staff;
- Good local and national contacts;
- Effective support for probationer teachers;
- Well-publicised and accessible information on external courses;
- Attendance at in-service courses and arrangements for relaying information to colleagues.

2.4    Ethos and Management and Quality Assurance

2.4.1    Ethos was good or very good in over 80% of departments. In departments of more than one teacher there were very good relationships and teamwork among specialist teachers, although some non-specialists did not feel well supported. Many teachers gave freely of their time to help to run extra-curricular activities.

2.4.2    Good departments had high expectations of pupils, were well organised, used interesting displays and provided challenging and interesting tasks.

2.4.3    In some schools, RME staff had difficulty motivating pupils who did not regard the subject as important.

2.4.4    The majority of principal teachers displayed good leadership skills, although there were important weaknesses in 20% of cases. In departments without a principal teacher there were important weaknesses in 65%, often associated with a lack of experience or subject qualification.

2.4.5    Self-evaluation was an area of weakness. The extent to which teachers systematically evaluated the quality of their work was good or better in only 45% of departments. Elsewhere there were important weaknesses or practice was unsatisfactory.

2.4.6    Development planning was good or very good in 55% of departments, had important weaknesses in 35% and was unsatisfactory in 10%. The main areas for improvement included:

- making better use of audit techniques to identify priorities for development
- setting development targets which were more specific and related to improving learning, teaching and pupils' attainment
- taking clearer approaches to judging the impact of initiatives and developments **on** pupils' learning and attainment

3    **Other National Developments**

3.1    5-14 National Guidelines were published in November 1992, with guidelines on Level F following in February 1999.

3.2    SCCC have published advice on RME 5-14 in 1995 and assessment exemplification in 1997.

3.3    Most recently, this year Learning and Teaching Scotland have published 'Effective teaching of Religious and Moral Education: Personal Search. This was launched at a national seminar attended by an advisor and the Curriculum Advisory Group chairperson.

**4**      **Angus Council – Current Position**

     4.1      A range of advice documents and resources are available within Angus and there is provision to address for RME in the Education Service Plan.

     4.2      Local Support Groups have recently produced:

- A programme of study 5-14
- advice and support on level-related assessment 5-14
- advice and support on resources 5-14
- curriculum support for various national units for use post 16.

     4.3      In-service training has been offered locally in the areas of:

- support for Christianity and Other World Religions 5-14
- assessment in Higher Still
- assessment 5-14.

**5**      **Standards and Quality in Secondary Schools 1995-2000 (Religious and Moral Education): Angus Council proposed Action plan**

     5.1      Audit RME provision in Angus in relation to SEED recommendations.

     5.2      Follow-up recent national initiative on personal search eg by INSET.

     5.3      Provide INSET on assessment as part of learning.

     5.4      Set up a local working party to review provision in S1/S2 to ensure articulation with existing P1-P7 programme of study.

     5.5      Set up a Local Support Group to develop courses for S3/4 based on national units and extended to cover the requirements for core provision.

     5.6      Explore ways to increase attendance at INSET courses or develop other ways to provide support to staff.

     5.7      Provide advice for schools on the provision and use of resources for RME.      NL/AR

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