

Vicky Thomas
Independent RE Consultant

25 November 2016

Dear Ms Thomas

Monitoring visit: Twynyrodyn Primary School

Thank you for your letter outlining your concerns about the monitoring visit of Twynyrodyn Primary School. I have been asked to investigate.

As part of my investigation, I have reviewed relevant documentation and have spoken to Mr Andrew Thorne (HMI) and Mrs Jane McCarthy (HMI and lead inspector on the monitoring visit).

I am sorry that the information you have received from the school about Estyn's inspection of progress in relation to one recommendation has caused concern. However, as the information was gained through a source not present during inspection activity, it has been difficult to ascertain the exact comments made at the time.

In your letter, you make comments that Mr Thorne criticised the school for an over reliance on members of the clergy and that during the core inspection in 2015 that there was a criticism made that there was little use of the clergy. I have considered carefully the evidence bases from the core inspection and the follow up visit. There is no evidence to suggest that the teams criticised the use of members of the clergy for collective worship. In my discussions with Mr Thorne, he states that he did not criticise the school's use of the clergy and he comments about the effectiveness of visitors from the local church in the main evaluation. The main evaluation provided to the school states *'Visitors from the local church provide enriching opportunities that teach pupils about important religious festivals well.'*

It is impossible for me to confirm that the team used comments to suggest that there was an over reliance on members of the clergy. However, although I am unable to confirm this, the main evaluation confirms that the team found the use of members of the local church to be effective in providing enriching opportunities for pupils during collective worship.

In your letter, you correctly state that Estyn guidance and the law states that most acts of collective worship should be wholly or mainly of a Christian character. In discussion with Mr Thorne, he states that during an interview with the headteacher regarding progress against the recommendation, there was a discussion on the difference between holding assemblies and collective worship. As part of this discussion, Mr Thorne remembers the headteacher being unsure about the differences between these and that Mr Thorne shared the Estyn guidance with the headteacher using the exact wording contained in the guidance to clarify the differences. He states that by the end of this interview, the headteacher had a clearer understanding of the differences.

Mr Thorne states that he did not say that every act of collective worship should have a Bible story.

In your letter, you state that you would agree that sometimes hymn practice cannot completely fulfil the requirements of an act of collective worship. You also state that the school assures you that every hymn practice includes a story and a prayer with an opportunity for reflection.

From my investigation of the evidence and discussions with Mr Thorne, the team observed a Foundation Phase hymn practice during the monitoring visit. During this observation, although there was a short prayer at the end of the singing practice, there was no opportunity for pupils to reflect. There was also no story shared with pupils as part of this hymn practice.

However, I do agree that our guidance says that 'An act of collective worship may incorporate a song'. Therefore, the session observed would have met with the statutory requirements for collective worship. This was only part of the evidence collected in regards to this recommendation and was part of the evidence considered around the recommendation.

I am unable to see from your letter how the team criticised pupil of the week assemblies. Mr Thorne states that there was a discussion regarding whether these included an act of collective worship. This followed on as a line of enquiry from an interview with a group of Year 6 pupils who described the assemblies as only receiving certificates. Mr Thorne does not recall the exact questions used with pupils due to the length of time since the monitoring visit. However, the pupils discussed the weekly assemblies. They also stated that there was never an assembly on a Friday. Scrutiny of the school file and timetable also stated that the time allotted for assembly time was in fact 'Golden Time' in key stage 2. Therefore, the school would not have met the recommendation of meeting statutory requirements for a daily act of collective worship. However, during the team discussion they felt that the school had made progress since the core inspection and decided on a judgement of satisfactory progress.

In conclusion, I have given all the elements of your complaint serious and detailed consideration. I feel that the team fully considered a wide range of evidence when reaching their judgement on the recommendation and, as a result, decided that although the school did not yet fully comply with the statutory requirements to hold a daily act of collective worship, it had made satisfactory progress since the core inspection. The team provided a full explanation during the feedback meeting and Mr Thorne and Mrs McCarthy, the Reporting Inspector, state that there were no complaints or concerns raised at this time.

It is important for Estyn to know what others think about our work and we value all feedback and hope that it helps us to continuously improve. I am sorry that you have felt the need to raise these concerns but hope that you are satisfied that your complaint had been carefully considered.

Yours sincerely

Jonathan Cooper

Jonathan Cooper, HMI