

Beauchamp Middle School's REQM Experience

Religious Education has been my area since taking on the subject coordinator role in September 2008- through that time I had developed the department into one that I felt was well resourced, well planned, and, in most instances, well taught. The school went into Special Measures in October 2011- four weeks into our new Head's tenure however with a determined, maintained effort we were graded as a 'Good' school just fifteen months later. We were all exceptionally pleased with the outcome and I felt the time was right for a new challenge in the department. Whilst the teaching and learning across the school was 'Good', I felt things had become a little stuck in R.E. and it needed some attention to bring it even further forward.

Our School Improvement Partner emailed in early January 2014 advertising the Religious Education Quality Mark and offering a bursary to support our application. I decided that the REQM framework was really just what we were looking for in order to audit the department, develop it, and, hopefully be rewarded with some kind of national recognition after our July assessment. We contacted the REQM administration team and requested a date to be assessed for the Bronze accreditation and began to work through compiling evidence to satisfy these requirements. What was most telling early on through working with the REQM organisation was that they were professional, helpful and flexible, such traits are imperative when working with schools.



Students on a Faith Tour visit at a local Gurdwara

The REQM website is very easy to navigate and informative. Whilst I stand by this, perhaps I should have been a little more careful to make the most of the information as I was under the impression that to meet Gold, a school first had to be awarded Bronze and then Silver.

Whilst this isn't the case, I'm very glad I made this oversight as it has enabled R.E. to be a meaningful priority at our school now for the last three years. We have meticulously used the REQM framework to reflect, review and adapt as necessary to not only meet the award criteria but to use this to feed into wider school outcomes- the impact has been most striking and at our recent SACRE observation the Chair described R.E. at our school as "inspirational".



Students on a Faith Tour visit at a local Church

Through using the REQM assessment framework and focusing on the five core areas of: Learners and Learning, Teachers and Teaching, Curriculum, Subject Leadership and Continuing Professional Development we have had clear areas of to work towards, continuously now since the process started. Whilst it was important for me to ensure we weren't just showing evidence on the day for the sake of receiving the accreditation the compiling of the evidence allowed focus and it also required thought, forward planning and commitment.

I am really very pleased that the REQM was recommended to us. By working through the levels of the award it has allowed continued focus and meaningful development to all stakeholders, especially the children who describe the subject as challenging and engaging. Our best critics are our students and the fact that our Gold level assessor said she'd nearly made her mind up after meeting them spoke volumes. We have moved forward at a sustainable pace thanks to the REQM assessment framework. These changes have had a positive impact which I am now able to share in my coaching role with other schools so that their students, teachers and their wider school community can benefit from the Religious Education Quality Mark just as we all have.