

Observation Feedback Report

Aquinas College – Year 12 Religious Studies

Topic: The Bible as a source of wisdom

The notes offered are not intended to represent what an observer might record in a lesson, which would depend on the policy and practice defined by the school. Instead, they seek to explore the evidence of learning achieved in the video evidence and hence the inferred impact of the teaching. This can be used for comparison in staff discussion about the lessons.

Learning

- Students engage well with the initial recall activity.
- Early self-assessment against the demanding learning objectives gives a range of responses for students' self-awareness and for informing teacher assessment. Used later in the lesson students show that they can explain their self-assessments and begin to identify what would help them further improve their confidence levels. The teacher also explicitly uses their self-assessments to drive the pace and direction of the lesson, explaining this to them.
- The post it not activity on the meaning of life requires students to reflect deeply but quickly, which they appear to do thoughtfully.
- Students raise relevant and appropriate ideas about factors that might influence the understanding and formation of belief in the meaning of life for themselves and their contemporaries.
- In the debate, the students respond well to the structure and format, asking responsibility as team and as individuals. They raise questions for each other and respond to opposing points from the other team. They reflect deeply, participate well and include Biblical references when needed.
- Students show that they can challenge each other, e.g. whether the Bible is 'universal' in its influence on different people.
- As the debate progresses students bring in relevant and provocative viewpoints, grounded in practical everyday demands and events. There is a good range of participation and involvement across the class.

Teaching

- The teacher introduction indicates that this lesson has ambitious objectives and will involve a range of working strategies. It builds on previous exploration of the nature of authority and morality. The teacher carefully indicates that this learning has benefit

regardless of students' own individual beliefs, a point which is reinforced with students during the lesson.

- Initial activity recalling key information from the last lesson makes relevant prompts for students and links to this lesson for them.
- The objectives and context of the lesson are clarified well and with precision, linked to self-assessment activities. Self-assessments are followed up so that the teacher can adjust the lesson pace and direction.
- Latecomers are immediately integrated into the flow of the lesson through direct questions. This involves them effectively and signals to all students that arriving late has consequences!
- A 'simple' post it not activity cleverly enables students to access and explore each other's thinking about the meaning of life and the underlying authority and influence that may be guiding this.
- The practical basis of the Bible is effectively linked to students' lives, enabling them to grasp an abstract concept quickly.
- The structure of the group activity gives students the opportunity to prepare, work and evaluate together, demonstrating the required skills of selecting and presenting knowledge. The explanation of the debating task sets high expectations of students, again explicitly linked to the required skills. The proposed debate is structured to ensure it is active and purposeful and that everyone participates. This has good impact in the activity that follows. The teacher facilitates discussion efficiently without overshadowing student contributions.
- Closing statements require students to summarise their arguments and teacher evaluation takes them back to the objectives effectively.
- Feedback and reflection by the teacher after the lesson indicates that this PGCE student has adapted the lesson due to absent students. She comments largely on procedural aspects of the lesson rather than the learning and student progress, but knows that the next lesson will give her precise information about student's achievement and understanding from this preparatory stage.

Overall this is a stimulating and provocative lesson for students, dealing with large scale and complex concepts very well. It pushes students to reflect, evaluate and support their arguments with evidence. They appreciate the clear separation between personal beliefs and their ability to evaluate aspects of the subject objectively. They work well together in response to well-planned and structured activities.

Questions that might be used to explore the lesson further with the teacher:

- Students appear to have responded very well throughout the lesson. Were there any further aspects of debate, argument or content you might have expected them to demonstrate?
If not, did they exceed your expectations at any time?
- How might you ensure that students take the full richness of experience gained in this lesson into their personal work in the next lesson?

- What opportunities are there to support and develop those students who missed this lesson?
- How precise do Biblical references need to be in students' arguments and work? To what extent did they achieve these expectations in this lesson? What are the implications of this for future lessons?

Extending the learning

Great lessons and great progress stem partly from great teaching, but are evidenced by deep learning. What are the opportunities in or beyond this lesson to extend the learning over the coming sequence to achieve this? Clearly there would not be time to pursue all of these options, but one or two might add depth and value to students' learning.

- If not already completed, small groups of students might be given the same question and asked to form a written answer together including Biblical references. The groups could then compare their answers, evaluate them together and form the best collaborative response possible across the class to model exemplary outcomes.
- If a significant number of students missed this lesson current students might structure and deliver parts of it with them at another time.
- The current process could be reversed, i.e. give students a range of linked and concise Biblical references and ask them, probably in small groups, to identify the argument or viewpoint that would hold them together.