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RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Paper 0490/01

Paper 1

General comments

It was once again pleasing to note a consistent improvement in the general standard of work. As with last year, there were some excellent scripts from a number of candidates. Far fewer candidates appeared to have studied only Christianity. There was a very significant improvement in answers on all three religions and especially with regard to Islam and Judaism. However, the problem still remains that a considerable number of candidates demonstrate no real knowledge of the differences between the three religions and therefore write their responses in a syncretistic manner which cannot gain them much credit.

There were very few brief answers this year, and more candidates made a real attempt to get to grips with the subject matter which was being addressed. Indeed, it was clear that a number of candidates had run out of time in answering the questions and, whilst this is an issue which needs to be addressed by Teachers, it was good to see the demonstration of so much knowledge. For some questions, there were some very thorough and mature responses.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

All questions were well answered. A significant number did not know what the Pentecost was and wrote about Easter. **Questions 2** (Islam) and **3** (Judaism) were generally not as well answered as **Question 1** (Christianity). In particular, candidates were unsure about Channukah. However there were some excellent responses on the mosque.

Section B

Question 4 (Christianity) caused problems for some candidates who confused 'features' with 'rites of passage', just as they had confused 'symbols' with 'rites of passage' in 2001. **Question 5** (Islam) was very popular and well answered by most who attempted it. **Question 6** (Judaism) was, again, the least well done, although there were some very good responses from some candidates who clearly had a good knowledge of Judaism.

Section C

Question 8 (on pilgrimage) was by far the more popular of the two questions in this section. However, many candidates wrote about all three religions in this question although only two were required and could be credited. **Question 7** (on sacred books) was attempted by a few candidates, but most showed little understanding of what was required and confused the sacred writings.

Paper 0490/02

Paper 2

General comments

This Paper was generally very well done. The main difficulty, once again, lay in candidates omitting one or more of the required religions from their answers or else submitting responses on three instead of two.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

This question on birth ceremonies was fairly well answered. Part (b) on the *importance* attached to birth ceremonies caused some difficulty as many candidates merely repeated what they had said in (a).

Question 2

This was not a popular question and produced some very confused responses on the roles of religious leaders.

Question 3

This was a very popular question and produced the best responses from candidates who seemed to feel secure writing about festivals.

Question 4

There were some good responses to this question, although candidates seemed unsure about the distinction between public and private worship.

Question 5

This question on change in religion was also well answered by most who attempted it. Candidates clearly had some idea about issues within religions where some people felt that attitudes were out-of-date. However, many candidates wasted a considerable amount of time writing about more than one religion.

Paper 0490/04

Paper 4

General comments

This Paper gives the greatest scope for candidates to display their general ability and understanding in Religious Studies. There was the full range of responses. Candidates seemed to find the questions accessible and responded with enthusiasm. Virtually all the candidates managed to complete the Paper in the set time. This year there was less confusion about facts concerning the three faiths and more balance in the responses, rather than the usual over-emphasis on Christianity. Very few resorted to preaching, and their evaluative skills tended to display a more scholarly use of evidence.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Most candidates approached the task of explaining rights sensibly and offered a good interpretation of Sources E and F.

Question 2

This question was much better done than in previous years, with most candidates able to interpret the religious teachings of the three texts.

Question 3

The candidates who understood the text by Pastor Niemoller produced some excellent responses. However, there were many who struggled with the passage and produced rather weak and irrelevant answers.

Question 4

There were some extremely good responses and only a few very weak ones to this question. Most seemed to find the texts easier to interpret than the pictures, and there were some excellent interpretations of both Martin Luther King Jr. and Desmond Tutu.

Question 5

The great majority of candidates had very strong feelings about the issue of inequalities in society and produced some excellent answers dealing with the issue in their own societies, involving much personal material and emotion. Much of the material was fascinating to read and gained high marks.