

Aviation House  
125 Kingsway  
London  
WC2B 6SE

T 0300 123 1231  
F 020 7421 6855  
[enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)



21 May 2012

Mrs C Lewis  
Headteacher  
Hollyfield Primary School  
Hollyfield Road  
Sutton Coldfield  
West Midlands  
B75 7SG

Dear Mrs Lewis

### **Ofsted 2012–13 subject survey inspection programme: religious education (RE)**

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and pupils, during my visit on 8 May 2012 to look at work in RE.

The visit provided valuable information which will contribute to our national evaluation and reporting. Published reports are likely to list the names of the contributing institutions but individual institutions will not be identified in the main text without their consent.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included: interviews with staff and pupils; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work; and observation of three lessons.

The overall effectiveness of RE is satisfactory with good features.

### **Achievement in RE**

Achievement in RE is satisfactory with some good features.

- By the end of Key Stage 1, some aspects of pupils' achievement are good. The pupils are very positive about RE and talk about why they think it is important. They believe that it is 'good' that they should 'learn about the religions'. Pupils value and enjoy the subject. They routinely learn to link their learning about religion to personal reflections about how they should act and behave and about what is right and good.
- Pupils in Key Stage 1 can recall Bible stories and have a reasonable knowledge of certain important words associated with different religious traditions. They are interested in and curious about religion. In response to a range of religious artefacts they are able to raise their own simple questions.

- By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils continue to be very positive about religion in general and about RE in particular. Most pupils share the view that different cultures and religions are important and that it is important to 'show respect' towards religion. They think it is right for people to be different, as the case of dress code adopted by some Muslim women.
- Pupils show a strong awareness of the social and moral teaching associated with Christianity and with other religions. They are able to address questions like, 'What do Christians teach about honesty?' and 'Why is it important to be fair?'
- While factual knowledge about religion is broadly in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus pupils are not so knowledgeable when it comes to explaining the significance and meaning or principal beliefs which underlie many aspects of religious life and practice. For example, while recognising important features of fasting pupils in Year 6 were unable to explain its deeper significance.
- RE makes a good contribution to pupils' moral, social and cultural development and a satisfactory contribution to pupils' spiritual development.

### **Quality of teaching in RE**

The quality of teaching in RE is satisfactory.

- At its best, RE teaching encourages pupils to reflect upon values and virtues which are expressed by religious traditions, for example, concern for others, honesty, forgiveness, calmness and justice. Pupils are encouraged to adopt an investigative approach. They raise and explore their own questions. However, pupils are not invited to critically think about their own ideas or questions to help them understand in what sense a question may be a good question or how a question might be altered to make it a better question.
- Pupils link what they learn about religions to reflections about their own life. Good use is also made of religious artefacts and less able pupils are well supported. However, for many pupils, particularly the more able, the work is not sufficiently challenging.
- Sometimes lessons lack clarity as to what the pupils are enquiring into or what key question is being asked.
- Good use is made of praise and encouragement to support pupils but insufficient use is made of assessment to provide clear feedback to pupils enabling them to understand what they need to do to improve.

### **Quality of the curriculum in RE**

The quality of the curriculum in RE is satisfactory.

- There is a good balance in the way the curriculum is designed to explore different religious traditions and appropriate weight is given to the teaching of Christianity. The time allocated to RE in all key stages is good. The subject is planned so that topics first taught in Key Stage 1 are

returned to as part of a spiralling curriculum to reinforce and deepen learning. However, monitoring to ensure progression is not always sufficient.

- The curriculum meets the requirement of the locally agreed syllabus well to help pupils develop personally, socially and morally by making use of material drawn from different faith traditions. However, the requirement that pupils should also be learning about religious traditions gaining a holistic view of their beliefs, expressions and practices is not so well developed.
- The school has established good relationships with local faith traditions and with another Birmingham school which has a very different ethnic mix. These contacts provide good opportunities for pupils to gain first-hand experience of other religions in the community.

### **Effectiveness of leadership and management in RE**

The effectiveness of leadership and management in RE is good.

- The subject is well led by a clearly identified member of staff. It is also well supported by the senior leadership team and by all the teaching and support staff. All show a strong commitment to the subject. The subject is also well resourced and well funded.
- A well-defined RE policy and good action plan are in place. The subject has been helped a good deal in its planning by training accessed from the local authority.
- The school has good monitoring procedures and, with its high expectations, is well placed to improve further its RE provision.

### **Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:**

- develop a stronger focused enquiry-based approach to RE to help pupils secure a more in-depth understanding of the religions studied
- providing more classroom-based assessment feedback so pupils have a clearer idea of what they need to do to improve.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop RE in the school.

As explained previously, a copy of this letter will be published on the Ofsted website and sent to SACRE. It may be used to inform decisions about any future inspection. A copy of this letter is also being sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

**Dilwyn Hunt**  
**Additional Inspector**