

Alexandra House  
33 Kingsway  
London  
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404040  
F 020 7421 6855  
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)



03 August 2009

Mrs J Austin  
Headteacher  
Fibbersley Park Primary School  
Noose Lane  
Willenhall  
Wolverhampton  
WV13 3BB

Dear Mrs Austin

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Religious Education

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit 24 June 2009 to look at work in religious education (RE).

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of the subject the visit had a particular focus on the creative thinking 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. All feedback letters will be published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half-term.

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

The overall effectiveness of RE was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

The pupils' achievement in RE is good.

- Most pupils arrive in school with a limited background knowledge and experience of religion. They leave with a good understanding of some of the key features of a diversity of religions. They are also able to talk sensibly about the significance which religions have in people's lives and can relate this to aspects of their own experience.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, pupils make good progress in exploring relevant aspects of their experience and begin to use simple religious language appropriately. Throughout Key Stage 1 pupils develop

their knowledge and understanding of features of religion making links between these and their own experience. They begin to understand how aspects of religion relate to each another and recognise how important these can be in different people's lives. For example, pupils spoke with confidence about their experience of recreating a Gurdwara. The teacher had gone to great lengths to make the experience authentic and successfully created a reverent atmosphere. As a result, the pupils raised very sensible questions and demonstrated their respect for the way different people celebrate and worship.

- By the end of Key Stage 2 pupils have a good understanding of the specific religions they study. For example, they raise questions about the beliefs and practices involved in the Christian, Muslim and Sikh faiths. They are able to make comparisons between different religious traditions and relate these to their own experiences and ideas.
- Older pupils are becoming more adept in their use of higher order skills of investigation, enquiry and interpretation in relation to religious material. Their ability to discuss ultimate questions is developed well.
- Pupils respond effectively to opportunities to reflect on their feelings and thoughts. Their use of religious vocabulary with which to organise their learning about different aspects of religion and belief is developing well although some find it quite hard to explain their significance. In one lesson, learning about prayer in the major religions, pupils responded with enthusiasm and interest because the teacher successfully created an atmosphere where they felt safe to share some of their very personal experiences.
- RE makes an excellent contribution to pupils' personal development. They find RE fascinating, greatly appreciating the time spent in exploring religious and cultural diversity and reporting that they enjoy the challenge and the depth of thinking required of them. A rich range of experiences develops pupils' understanding of themselves and their place in the wider world.

### Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning in RE is good with outstanding features.

- The teaching of RE in the lessons seen was never less than good with some outstanding features. Teachers are clear about the purpose and direction of the pupils' learning based on an excellent understanding of the subject.
- Teachers have a very good appreciation of the need for open, investigative learning within an ethos of respect for others. Excellent use is made of opportunities for reflection. Teachers use sensitivity when dealing with issues related to diversity helping pupils recognise and deal with their own misconceptions or prejudices.
- A range of engaging activities are used in RE including information and communication technology, visits, drama, role play, writing poetry and art. These are carefully planned to ensure they support pupils' learning and

secure their enthusiasm and interest in the subject. Explanations and the design of tasks are well-considered ensuring that learning is skilfully structured to meet lesson objectives. For example, in the Year 2 class good use was made of role-play to re-construct aspects of Sikh worship to explore what it is like to be an adherent of that faith.

- Pupils work well together. Many concentrate for sustained periods, engaging in group work in a mature and sensible manner. The discussion work of some pupils in Year 5, who were examining the significance of prayer in worship, was of a particularly good standard.

## Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum in RE is satisfactory with good features.

- The provision for RE meets statutory requirements and the school has been effective in using, adapting and extending the locally agreed syllabus and guidance materials from the local authority. As a result, the curriculum is imaginative and thoughtful. The choice of religions studied is well planned and methodical. There is a good balance of work between the two attainment targets. However, some units offer high levels of challenge while others are much less demanding. Occasionally, the links between topics are not made explicit enough, and the central focus of each unit is lost.
- The school has established a straightforward, manageable approach to assessment in RE. The subject leader has identified the need to review the way level expectations are defined in order to make these more straightforward, reliable and relevant to the learning.
- Very strong links are made with personal, social and health education and other curriculum areas. There are good opportunities for enrichment activities in terms of visits and visitors. RE is given prominence throughout the school in: the links made to RE through specific assembly themes such as the church calendar and saints' days; celebrations of diverse cultures and beliefs; and, engagement with the local and wider community.

## Leadership and Management

The leadership and management of RE are good.

- A pattern of high expectations, systematic teaching and effective leadership, has led to the subject being held in high regard across the school. The subject leader has a very clear understanding of the priorities for improvement based on good monitoring and evaluation of the provision.
- A well-focused improvement plan for the subject is in place closely linked to the priorities of raising attainment in the school improvement plan with a set of clear and appropriate priorities targeted on improving provision and raising standards.
- The subject leader is highly focused on pupils' learning. She has a very strong appreciation of the importance of RE to the pupils' personal

development and the potential of the subject to make a significant impact on their lives.

- She regularly provides professional development opportunities for the teachers in the school. She has established a very successful pattern of joint working with her colleagues.
- The subject has good capacity for further improvement and clear links are being forged between the development of RE and wider initiatives in the school particularly in relation to curriculum planning. The subject leader plans to revise the curriculum to incorporate opportunities for developing pupils' thinking skills in RE more systematically.

### Creative thinking

The quality of creative thinking in the context of RE is a strength and a key factor promoting the effectiveness of the subject. Pupils are encouraged to develop their ability to think openly and critically about religious ideas. A wide range of creative activities, including drama, role play, writing and art work, are used to support pupils' ability to reflect on, and extend their understanding of, key ideas of religion and belief. As yet, the thinking skills are not systematically embedded in the school's long and medium term planning, however the school is well on the way to achieving this.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- reviewing the pattern of the curriculum for RE to ensure it incorporates greater progression in pupils' learning and provides teachers with a clearer understanding of the central focus of each unit of work.

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

As I explained in my previous letter, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority, SACRE and will be published on Ofsted's website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Jacqueline K Wordsworth  
Her Majesty's Inspector