

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 0300 123 1231
F 020 7421 6855
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



29 March 2010

Mrs L Elliott
Headteacher
White Rock Primary School
Davies Avenue
Paignton
Devon
TQ4 7AW

Dear Mrs Elliot

Ofsted 2009-10 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 17 March 2010 to look at work in RE.

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of the subject, the visit had a particular focus on how well pupils are becoming effective learners 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.

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

The overall effectiveness of RE is good.

Achievement in RE

Achievement in RE is good.

- The standards reached by pupils at the end of both key stages meet the expectations of the agreed syllabus and in some respects exceed them.
- Achievement across the school in RE is good. By the end of Year 2, pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of the importance of religion in people's lives and recognise some links between religion and culture, for example through marriage ceremonies. They understand that symbols,

such as the Seder plate and Paschal candle, are often used to express religious beliefs and they can suggest meanings for them.

- By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils are developing a broad knowledge and understanding of the religions they have learnt about, particularly Judaism, and can identify key similarities and differences between them. They understand that for some people religion is a lifelong commitment that entails considerable self-sacrifice. They understand that beliefs and values can be expressed through art.
- The personal development of pupils in the context of RE is good. Careful attention is paid to ensuring the subject makes a particularly strong contribution to their spiritual and cultural development as well as their moral and social development. They understand how spirituality may be expressed through the creative arts and recognise the important contribution made by RE in the school to promote their inter-cultural understanding.

Quality of teaching of RE

The quality of teaching and learning in RE is good.

- RE is taught well across the school. Teachers have good subject knowledge and a tangible enthusiasm for the subject. Teaching is characterised by high expectations, the use of a wide range of engaging tasks and resources, and good encouragement for pupils to take responsibility for their learning. Teaching assistants are well-briefed and support pupils' learning well.
- Teachers explain the purpose and direction of pupils' learning particularly well. They take time at the beginning of the lesson to explain clearly what will happen in the lesson and what pupils will learn. Teaching secures good progress by careful reinforcing of pupils' learning. For example, Year 1 pupils learnt about Christian marriage services through drama, art work and applied what they had learnt to interpret wedding photographs.
- Enquiry-based work is encouraged from Year 1, where pupils are presented with artefacts and asked to suggest meanings for them or how they are used, through to Year 6 where pupils conducted enquiries into the lives of 20th and 21st century Christian leaders.
- The majority of teaching is securing good progress and learning. As a result of good and improving assessment procedures, teachers generally meet the needs of all pupils, although tasks and resources do not stretch high ability pupils as consistently as they might. Teachers listen to, observe and question groups of pupils during lessons to reshape tasks and explanations to improve learning. While pupils demonstrate, through conversation and responses in lessons, good progress in their learning from RE, these achievements are not regularly documented or recorded.

Quality of the curriculum in RE

The quality of the curriculum in RE is good.

- The curriculum is related meticulously to the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus and the scheme of work for RE makes good use of local authority guidance to build in progression based on a skills ladder.
- RE is planned to give pupils a variety of experiences. They benefit from good opportunities provided where RE is planned alongside other subjects, such as art. Where RE is blocked alongside other foundation subjects as part of a topic, pupils have opportunities to comprehend religion within the wider context of world and human affairs. At other times, RE is taught as a discrete subject, giving pupils the experience of encountering aspects of religions in depth. This arrangement is working well and contributes to pupils consolidating their learning effectively. There is a strong emphasis in RE on supporting the development of pupils' wider learning and language skills.
- A particular strength of the provision is the increasing programme of beneficial enrichment activities, which provide pupils with first-hand experience of religion. These include strong links with local churches and visits from members of other faith communities. These are appreciated by pupils.
- Good use is being made of the level descriptions in the agreed syllabus to create manageable and effective mechanisms for assessing pupils' progress.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in RE

The effectiveness of leadership and management in RE is good.

- The RE coordinator provides enthusiastic and effective leadership. She sets an example of good subject knowledge and a sincere commitment to promoting high-quality learning in RE.
- The Torbay agreed syllabus has been carefully and fully implemented. The RE coordinator makes good use of her attendance at local RE training sessions to further improve planning, resources and teaching across the school.
- A systematic annual review of RE results in the identification of fitting priorities and contributes to the ongoing improvements in the subject.
- RE makes a good contribution to community cohesion. Strong links are established with the local Church of England and Methodist churches and increasingly with other faith communities in and beyond the local area.

Subject issue: how well pupils are becoming effective learners in RE

Learning skills are well planned and developed progressively in RE. Pupils use a wide range of challenging skills to make sense of their learning, for example, investigation, questioning, interpretation, evaluation and reflection. They are encouraged to engage in a process of enquiry in RE, for example instigating research through questions and assignment work in Year 6.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- linking assessment, recording and target-setting more closely to the level descriptions for both attainment targets
- extending the more able pupils by providing them with more challenging resources and activities.

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

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

Yours sincerely

Barbara Wintersgill
Additional Inspector