

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

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



25 May 2010

Miss H James
Headteacher
James Watt Primary School
Boulton Road
Soho
Birmingham
B21 0RE

Dear Miss James

Ofsted 2010-11 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 13 May 2010 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.

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.

- Standards in RE are at least in line with the expectations of the Birmingham agreed syllabus. An increasing number of pupils exceed these expectations because of the good teaching they receive.
- During Key Stage 1, pupils quickly acquire confidence in talking about religion and beliefs using a range of appropriate subject terminology. The main reason for their good progress is that children enjoy asking 'why' questions. They respond positively to the teachers' effective skills in using structured and graded questions. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils can identify important features of the religions they have studied. They are willing to listen to the views of others. A strength of their learning is their

understanding that religion is diverse and important in the lives of many people.

- Throughout Key Stage 2, pupils develop their understanding to cover a wider range of religions and beliefs. Most significant to the good achievement is the way in which pupils are beginning to develop their skills of investigating and enquiring into different traditions and ideas. However, the planned teaching of skills is not systematically embedded into the school's long- or medium-term planning. Nonetheless, pupils discuss and debate religious questions with confidence and enthusiasm and many are able to grasp and explain some of the more complex issues underpinning those questions. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils make further progress in drawing together their learning about religions to understand the connections between belief and practice. For example, they understand that the concept of forgiveness is common to a number of religious traditions.
- RE makes a very positive contribution to the pupils' wider personal development and, specifically, to their understanding of, and respect for, diversity. Throughout work in RE, pupils exercise a growing responsibility for their own learning. They work well independently and in groups. Pupils are encouraged to think for themselves and come to personal judgements. As a result, they develop the confidence to express their ideas. Pupils enjoy RE and respond enthusiastically to the opportunities it provides to participate in some challenging and engaging activities. Behaviour and attitudes to learning in lessons are exemplary.

Quality of teaching of RE

The quality of teaching of RE is good.

- Teaching is based on a very clear appreciation of the need for open, investigative learning within an ethos of respect for others. Teachers use great sensitivity when dealing with issues related to stereotyping, thus helping pupils to recognise and explore their own misconceptions or prejudices.
- Lessons proceed at a good pace and are skilfully managed. They are typified by excellent relationships, mutual respect, humour and warmth. In-class support is used effectively to support all pupils. Good-quality displays related to RE around the building also help to secure pupils' interest and enthusiasm for the subject. Effective use is made of opportunities for reflection.
- Good use is made of strategies, such as group activities, role-play and paired work, to ensure learning is fun and purposeful. Work is often planned with care which extends the pupils' learning skills. For example, there is a clear focus on developing confidence in talking about their learning. However, activities are not always adapted to ensure all pupils' learning needs are met, particularly the most able.
- Pupils' attainment is regularly assessed. Emphasis is placed on using a range of assessment strategies to ensure that all pupils can make progress and to reflect their preferred learning style. Tasks set are generally

purposeful and varied. The quality of teachers' marking varies and sometimes does not enable pupils to understand how to improve their work and develop their skills.

Quality of the curriculum in RE

The quality of the curriculum in RE is good.

- The schemes of work have been carefully mapped against the requirements of the 2007 Birmingham agreed syllabus. The two areas of attainment 'learning about' and 'learning from' are well-represented and are interwoven effectively.
- A developing strength of the provision is the flexible and thoughtful approach to the way the subject is timetabled. A range of approaches is adopted, depending on the nature of the topic and the opportunities for cross-curricular links. When appropriate, good use is made of blocked units. Additionally, work is sometimes integrated well with other subjects and some use is made of shorter and more intensive patterns of learning.
- On occasions, where units of work attempt to cover too many different threads of learning, teachers are not always sure of the central focus of each unit of work. As a result, the connections between different tasks and topics are not as clear as they could be and more natural lines of enquiry are not followed through appropriately.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in RE

The effectiveness of leadership and management in RE is good.

- Effective strategies are in place to monitor and evaluate the quality of provision. A well-focused improvement plan for the subject is in place with a set of clear and appropriate priorities targeted on improving provision and raising standards.
- The arrangements for professional development are good. A range of well-conceived strategies is used to develop generic teaching skills and an understanding of effective learning in RE.
- The arrangements for assessing pupils' progress are good. Analysis of assessment data is used effectively, particularly in relation to evaluating the achievement of different groups of pupils. The use of assessment information to plan increasingly challenging work is less successful.
- 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 and community cohesion.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- further developing the use of assessment opportunities to inform pupils of progress and to plan subsequent work

- reviewing the pattern of the curriculum for RE to ensure it incorporates greater progression in pupils' learning, particularly for the most able 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 previously, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority and to SACRE and will be published on the Ofsted website under the URN for your school. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Jacqueline Wordsworth
Her Majesty's Inspector