

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

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



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Mrs G Stubbs
Headteacher
Wensley Fold (VC) Church of
England Primary School
Manor Road
Blackburn
BB2 6LX

Dear Mrs Stubbs

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 18 October 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 without their consent.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included: interviews with staff, pupils, a governor, the local school improvement officer, parents and a leader from the local Muslim community; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work; and observation of six lessons.

The overall effectiveness of RE is good with outstanding features.

Achievement in RE

Achievement in RE is good with some outstanding features.

- The attainment of pupils by the end of Key Stage 2 is, in many respects, above the expectations set out in the locally agreed syllabus. Pupils develop a wide range of knowledge and understanding of religion. They have a good grasp of the significance which religion and belief plays in people's lives. When, for example, a group of Year 5 pupils developed a set of questions to ask a visitor about the place of the Bible in his life, their ideas showed an impressive insight into the nature of sacred writings.

- Pupils also make good progress across Key Stage 1. By the end of the key stage, they can identify a range of different religions and recognise that religion is about what you believe.
- Pupils of all abilities and ethnic groups make equally good progress. Their ability to undertake more independent enquiries into religion and to debate issues related to the truth of different beliefs are less well developed.
- The quality of learning is also good. Pupils are usually actively involved in lessons and have opportunities to discuss their ideas and reflect on aspects of their experience. Their behaviour is exemplary and they model respect for the views of others. Pupils are very clear that it is important to respect different opinions.
- The contribution of RE to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. It promotes a very positive view of cultural diversity, encourages exploration of ethical issues and the nature of society, and fosters a sensitive engagement with feelings and emotions. For example, a Year 6 lesson sensitively explored the experiences of those involved in the holocaust exploring the ideas of empathy and segregation.

Quality of teaching of RE

The quality of teaching of RE is good with outstanding features.

- Lessons are planned in detail with careful attention is paid to ensure that pupils are actively involved in their learning. A range of lively strategies and resources is used with careful attention to matching tasks to pupils' different needs.
- Teachers explain the purpose of the learning very carefully and use questioning well to check pupils' progress and stimulate discussion.
- While very good examples exist of teachers fostering a sense of genuine enquiry, on occasions teaching limits the opportunities for open learning, particularly when the medium-term planning is too structured and over-directs pupils' learning.
- Pupils' work is marked regularly and some good use is made of homework and literacy activities to promote deeper learning.

Quality of the curriculum in RE

The quality of the curriculum in RE is good.

- An important strength of the curriculum is the skilful balance of securing breadth of learning while respecting and building on the distinctive religious background of the pupils.
- A comprehensive scheme of work is in place which provides a good basis for helping secure consistency of practice and ensures that the expectations of the agreed syllabus are met in broad terms. A flexible approach towards the subject is adopted. While it is generally taught

weekly in half-termly units, opportunities are sought for cross-curricular links particularly with literacy. These are carefully monitored and recorded.

- However, the quality of the unit plans varies and limited use is made of the levels of attainment to ensure progression within the planning. On some occasions, and particularly in some units linked to teaching about Christianity, there is uncertainty about the use of the two attainment targets of 'learning about' and 'learning from' religion.
- Assessment arrangements for the subject have been developed with careful attention. Consideration is being given to extending the use of 'I can' statements to support the monitoring of progress. Further progress needs to build from a review of the planning and the identification of differentiated learning outcomes.
- An extensive programme of enrichment activities is in place to ensure that pupils have outstanding opportunities to meet and explore the local religious communities. Pupils have produced a series of guides to local places of worship which have been published and are used with other schools visiting the area.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in RE

The effectiveness of leadership and management in RE is good.

- The subject benefits from strong subject leadership which is well-supported by the senior leadership team. A commitment to high standards and improvement is reflected in the well-considered subject action plan.
- The RE leaders have kept abreast of current developments in the subject and teachers are well-supported with a file of plans, suggestions and guidance. A strong bank of resources for the subject is supplemented by the extensive community links.
- A broadly accurate self-evaluation has been produced linked to a pattern of monitoring of the subject. The inspection has highlighted the potential to extend the way that the effectiveness of the curriculum is reviewed.
- A major strength of RE is its contribution to the way in which the school promotes community cohesion. Very positive relationships with the local Muslim community have helped to secure their confidence in the work of the school. RE has also provided important opportunities for different groups across the community to meet and visit each other's places of worship.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- reviewing the curriculum to ensure:
 - a more consistent focus on open enquiry
 - a stronger pattern of progression across the school
 - a clearer set of differentiated objectives to support more focused assessment.

I hope that 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, the local Diocese of Blackburn and SACRE and will be published on the Ofsted website. It may be used to inform decisions about any future inspection.

Yours sincerely

Alan Brine
Her Majesty's Inspector