

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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Mr N Toplass
Headteacher
Phoenix Primary EBD School
Odell Road
Leamore
Walsall
WS3 2ED

Dear Mr Toplass

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 15 February 2011 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: observation of two lessons; interviews with staff and pupils; and scrutiny of pupils' work, curriculum planning and assessment records.

The overall effectiveness of RE is satisfactory.

Achievement in RE

Achievement in RE is satisfactory.

- While the standards attained by the pupils in RE are well-below average, their overall progress is satisfactory. Evidence from lessons and pupils' work indicates that they develop a basic knowledge and understanding of several religions during their time in school. All pupils study Christianity and at least one other religion. In Year 3, pupils learn about Judaism and write brief accounts of the importance of the Torah to people of the Jewish faith. In Year 5, where most progress is made, pupils enjoy learning about Islam and recall their learning well. In Year 6, pupils learn about Hinduism and write brief accounts of worship in the home and in the Mandir. Pupils acquire factual information at a steady rate. They are,

however, slower to develop the higher order skills of investigation and interpretation.

- The quality of pupils' personal development in RE is satisfactory. They usually enjoy the subject and are keen to participate in the learning. They show positive attitudes towards the subject. Strong links are formed with the school's 'respect' curriculum and this ensures that pupils are given time in lessons to reflect on their feelings and thoughts. The subject makes a sound contribution to students' moral, social and cultural development, but their spiritual development within RE is less well promoted.

Quality of teaching of RE

The quality of teaching of RE is satisfactory.

- Teaching involves a number of good features. The arrangements for securing the inclusion of all pupils are effective. Good-quality displays related to RE around the building also help to secure pupils' interest and enthusiasm for the subject. Lessons are typified by excellent relationships, mutual respect, humour and warmth. Skilful attention is paid to the pupils' specific emotional and behavioural needs.
- Much of the learning encourages the active participation of all the pupils, and careful attention is paid to securing the interest of boys. Helpful in-class support and appropriate planning ensure that pupils of all ages are engaged in their learning, although most complete the same work regardless of their ability. Sound use is made of opportunities for reflection.
- Planning is satisfactory. Learning objectives are clear and appropriate, although, in practice, tasks set by teachers do not always ensure that pupils meet those objectives. Sometimes the teachers try to cover too much in one lesson; consequently, the quality of learning slows. In some classes, there is too much reliance on the use of worksheets.
- Assessment opportunities are satisfactory. The introduction of the 'I can' statements is a useful tool in setting out the links with prior and subsequent learning. Furthermore, they are a positive step in enabling teachers to understand the level at which the pupils are performing. However, this information is not currently used to refine planning in the light of ongoing assessment.

Quality of the curriculum in RE

The quality of the curriculum in RE is satisfactory.

- The curriculum meets the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus. The school is starting the process of trialling and implementing the very recently published Walsall agreed syllabus. A strong and appropriate emphasis is placed on the way the subject can support and promote pupils' personal and emotional development. However, the school is unsure about the key focus, concept or question driving each unit or about the ways in which each unit builds on prior learning. Occasionally,

planning does not always provide for the structured development of skills and knowledge.

- There are some good opportunities for learning outside the classroom and through enrichment activities linked to RE. Good use is made of the local faith communities and those that are further afield to support learning. The school is keen to extend this provision.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in RE

The effectiveness of leadership and management in RE is satisfactory.

- Appropriate strategies are in place to monitor and evaluate the quality of provision, including the involvement of the SACRE. 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, demonstrating that senior leaders know and understand the subject's strengths and areas for development.
- The subject is taught across most of the school by a higher-level teaching assistant (HLTA) as part of the school's planning, preparation and assessment time. The arrangements for professional development are sound with the HLTA regularly attending training provided by the local authority.
- The subject has sound 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 community cohesion.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- exploring ways of developing the RE curriculum to provide more opportunities for sustained enquiry-based learning and a clearer, more progressive overall curriculum for RE
- ensuring that work is more closely matched to the pupils' capabilities.

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 published on the Ofsted website. It may be used to inform decisions about any future inspection. Except in the case of academies, a copy of this letter is also being sent to SACRE and your local authority.

Yours sincerely

Jacqueline Wordsworth
Her Majesty's Inspector