

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404040
F 020 7421 6855
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



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Mr Noel Lellman
Headteacher
Reigate Priory Community Junior School
Bell St
Reigate
Surrey
RH2 7RL

Dear Mr Lellman

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Religious Education

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 2 October 2007 to look at work in religious education (RE).

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of RE, the visit had a particular focus on the subject's contribution to the promotion of community cohesion.

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, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of two lessons.

The overall effectiveness of RE was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

Standards in RE are above average and achievement in RE is good.

- Pupils enjoy RE. Given their capability and starting points pupils achieve high standards and there is clear evidence of many Year 6 pupils producing work at Level 5. The majority of written work available provides evidence that most pupils, including those with learning difficulties, are making good progress in relation the attainment target related to 'learning about religion'.
- A lot of pupils' high performance in 'learning from religion' is not recorded; particularly work on individual whiteboards and oral work. The combined evidence indicates that pupils are gaining knowledge,

skills and understanding at a good rate across Key Stage 2. RE makes a good contribution to their personal development.

Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning in RE is good.

- Virtually all pupils make good progress and show good attitudes to their work in RE. The subject leader's medium term planning and class teachers' lesson planning, often in collaboration with colleagues, is generally good.
- Most teachers have good subject knowledge, which they share with one another. The work set for pupils of different abilities is appropriately challenging and provides opportunities for pupils to achieve well. Teachers use a good range of resources and the effective use of information and communication technology enlivens lessons. The wide range of approaches to teaching and learning, which build on well-established strategies used in other areas of the curriculum, serve to extend pupils' learning.
- Although formal assessment and recording are not well established, assessment for learning is used effectively in lessons. Ongoing assessment gives teachers a good understanding of progress in individual lessons, but less so across a year or the key stage.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory.

- The curriculum meets statutory requirements and the school is in the process of implementing the new agreed syllabus.
- Long and medium term planning is generally thorough and although progression does not stand out in the formal planning, lessons have been pitched accurately for the majority of children.
- Continuity is good and the curriculum is organised in a way that allows pupils to build well on what they have already done, although the questions that frame the curriculum are not always allocated to appropriate year groups. Religions are introduced through themes which feed into subsequent focused study of each religion. A good Year 6 unit offers pupils the opportunity to research and make presentations on different religions in a way that enables them to achieve well. The school offers an adequate range of popular enrichment activities, notably visits to places of worship, which it hopes to extend.

Leadership and management

The leadership and management of RE are good overall.

- The subject leader has a good understanding of RE and has a strong commitment to improvement. She is an enthusiastic manager with a

clear understanding of the strengths of the subject and the improvements needed. Improvement planning is very good.

- The subject leader monitors and evaluates the work of other teachers in the subject effectively and supports the strong team work of year group teachers with a good range of resources and ideas for teaching.
- The effectiveness of subject management is due in part to the good strategies in place at senior management level for monitoring and evaluating the work of the subject leader. For example, a senior manager scrutinises the improvement plan to ensure that priorities have been achieved successfully. The subject benefits from good support by a dedicated governor.

The contribution of RE to promotion of community cohesion

The contribution of RE to community cohesion is good. Pupils are genuinely interested in religious diversity and are excited to learn about religions they have not encountered before. The RE curriculum provides many opportunities to explore the diversity of religion in the contemporary world. The school makes every effort to involve its few minority parents and children by inviting them to send in artefacts of faith and speak to classes. Every year, children visit a place of worship, for example Brighton Synagogue, and this gives them opportunities to meet people from a range of religious and cultural backgrounds. These visits are encouraged by parents. The new integrated curriculum enables pupils to see religions in their wider cultural context. For example, Year 5 pupils could talk about Hindu symbolism from the perspective of work in art and technology.

Inclusion

Most pupils make good progress in RE and respond well to a curriculum that, although still developing, motivates and interests them. Teachers have high expectations and as a result pupils achieve well.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- developing the arrangements for the assessment of RE
- ensuring all work is appropriately matched to the range of pupils' abilities.

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

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

Yours sincerely

Barbara Wintersgill
Additional Inspector