

Alexandra House  
33 Kingsway  
London  
WC2B 6SE

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



25 January 2008

Mr D Boucher  
Head teacher  
Brixworth CE Primary School  
Froxhill Crescent  
Brixworth  
Northampton  
NN6 9BG

Dear Mr Boucher

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Religious Education

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit 23 January 2008 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, a scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of three lessons.

The overall effectiveness of RE was judged to be outstanding.

Achievement and standards

The standards pupils attain in RE are above average and their achievement in the subject is outstanding.

- Pupils in the Foundation Stage are beginning to use some religious words such as christening, describing in simple terms what happens during the ceremony and relating this to their own experiences.
- By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils use correct vocabulary to describe religious artefacts and explain simply how they are used. Some pupils in Year 2 understood that the Torah contains lots of instructions or

rules about how Jewish people should live. They show respect for artefacts and understand why they must not touch the Torah.

- By the end of Key Stage 2 pupils have a good understanding of the specific religions they study. For example, they raise questions about the beliefs and practices involved in the Islamic and the Sikh faith. They are able to make comparisons between the major religious traditions and relate this to their own experiences and ideas.
- Older pupils are adept in their use of the higher order skills of investigation, enquiry and interpretation in relation to religious material. Their ability to discuss ultimate questions is developed well; one pupil, for example, posed the question 'does my soul really belong to God?' Pupils respond well to opportunities to reflect on their feelings and thoughts.
- RE makes an excellent contribution to pupils' personal development. They find RE fascinating, greatly appreciating the time spent in exploring religious and cultural diversity. All pupils are very positive about subject, reporting that they enjoy the challenge and the depth of thinking required of them. A rich range of experiences develops pupils' understanding of themselves and their place in the wider world.

### Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning in RE is good with outstanding features.

- Teaching is characterised by excellent subject knowledge, combined with very high expectations about challenging pupils' thinking. Teachers use strategies skilfully to engage pupils in deeper levels of analysis. The very best lessons make highly effective use of a range of strategies to consolidate and, sometimes, extend learning. All pupils know what they are going to learn because the teachers explain very clearly what they are going to do and what they will be able to understand by the end of the lesson. The best lessons make use of a mini-plenary to assess how well pupils are doing.
- Tasks cover a wide variety of learning styles allowing pupils to achieve well; occasionally, less attention is given to tasks that develop pupils' ability to research and write independently. Teachers make very effective use of information and communication technology to engage pupils' interest.
- Pupils work well together. Many concentrate for sustained periods, engaging in group work in a mature and sensible manner. The discussion work of some in Year 6, who were examining the significance of worship in Sikhism, was of a very high standard.

### Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum in RE is outstanding.

- The curriculum is imaginative and thoughtful. The choice of religions studied is well planned and methodical. There is a good balance of work between the two attainment targets with good attention paid to the systematic development of pupils' knowledge and understanding of

religion, particularly in the teaching of Christianity. There is scope to develop even more opportunities to build independent writing into RE.

- Very strong links are made with personal, social and health education and other curriculum areas. Theme Weeks enhance the RE curriculum. The Arts Weeks - both Indian and African – have served as valuable experiences for the pupils enabling them to explore different cultures to their own. There are good opportunities for enrichment activities in terms of visits and visitors. RE is given prominence throughout the school in: the links made to RE through specific assembly themes such as the church calendar and saints' days; celebrations of diverse cultures and beliefs; and, engagement with the local and wider community.

## Leadership and Management

The leadership and management of RE are outstanding.

- A pattern of high expectations, systematic teaching and effective leadership, has led to the subject being held in high regard across the school. The subject leader has a very clear understanding of the priorities for improvement based on good monitoring and evaluation of the provision. The subject action plan is closely linked to the priorities of raising attainment in the school improvement plan.
- The subject leader is highly focused on pupils' learning. She has a very strong appreciation of the importance of RE to the pupils' personal development and the potential of the subject to make a significant impact on their lives.
- She regularly provides professional development opportunities for the teachers in the school. She has established a very successful pattern of joint working with her colleagues. The newly devised curriculum, which incorporates opportunities for systematically developing spiritual awareness, is proving effective in raising pupils' attainment.

## Community Cohesion

RE makes an excellent contribution to the school's promotion of community cohesion. Issues affecting the local, national and global community have high profile in the RE curriculum and across the school. The opportunities for pupils to engage directly with representatives from local religious and cultural communities are good and the school has plans to increase further the frequency of these.

## Inclusion

Teachers recognise the needs of pupils who have learning difficulties or disabilities and set appropriate work for them. The varied approaches to learning ensure that pupils make outstanding progress.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- extending opportunities for independent research and writing.

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

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

Yours sincerely

Jacqueline K Wordsworth  
Her Majesty's Inspector