

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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Mrs F B Key  
Headteacher  
Temple Sowerby CE Primary School  
Temple Sowerby  
Penrith  
Cumbria  
CA10 1RZ

Dear Mrs Key

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Religious Education

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 06 February 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 good.

Achievement and standards

Pupils' achievement in RE is good.

- Standards across the school are in line with those outlined in the Cumbria agreed syllabus. They make good progress throughout the school.
- The youngest pupils are able to compare the experiences of people in Biblical stories with their own experiences and feelings. By the end of Year 2, pupils are able, for example, to handle artefacts with respect and write a special thought to be contained within a Mezuzah. Some are able to conduct simple research activities. Most pupils have an understanding of the ideas of right and wrong through reflecting on the importance of the 10 commandments to both Christians and Jews.

- By the end of year 6, pupils appreciate the significance and importance of religion in people's lives. They can, for example, explain the significance some key features of religious practice have for the members of a faith group. Pupils are beginning to explore their own ideas about religious beliefs and link their learning to issues about religion in the modern world. Where they are slightly less secure is in relation to their ability to use the higher order skills of investigation, enquiry and interpretation in relation to religious material.
- RE supports pupils' personal development effectively. It contributes well to their spiritual, social, moral and cultural development. Pupils are given time in lessons to reflect on their feelings and thoughts. Most show positive attitudes to the subject and find RE interesting. They report that RE helps them to understand other people's cultures and beliefs. Pupils spoke with enthusiasm about their visit to a Mandir in Bradford.

### Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning in RE is good.

- Lessons are well planned and teachers have sound subject knowledge. The teachers research the topics well and often present information accurately and carefully. Interactive whiteboards are used well to stimulate pupils' interest and enhance their learning. Teaching is characterised by warm relationships with pupils.
- Learning often proceeds at a good pace and effective use is made of explanation and questioning to stimulate and engage pupils' interest. However there is more scope for pupils to develop extended writing as there are too many worksheets used. As a result, the most able pupils are not always being sufficiently challenged to attain at the highest level.

### Quality of curriculum

The quality of curriculum in RE is good.

- The school is currently at a point of change in relation to planning the RE curriculum. The RE subject co-ordinator is in the process of developing new units of work utilising resources from a commercial scheme. Careful attention is paid to match the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus. A curriculum map is in place which blends a thematic approach to the subject with more systematic work on Hinduism and Judaism. Care has been taken to try to balance work on the two areas of attainment.
- Good links are made with personal, social and health education (PSHE) and this supports the pupils' personal development well. There is scope to explore stronger links with literacy as part of a drive to increase the level of challenge in some areas of the pupils' learning in RE.
- Assessment opportunities are developing. The recent 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. Currently pupils have to wait until the end of the year to find out about how they are doing in RE.

## Leadership and Management

The leadership and management of RE are good.

- Effective monitoring of teaching and learning in RE takes place on a two year cycle.
- A useful subject evaluation was produced to support the preparation for the visit with an accurate evaluation of the subject's current position within the school. Resources are well organised and wide ranging.

## Community Cohesion

RE makes a helpful contribution to the promotion of community cohesion; the teaching encourages respect for other faiths and the development of pupils' confidence to ask questions about religion. There are good opportunities provided for the pupils to visit places of worship.

## Inclusion

All pupils are included in RE lessons; no pupils are withdrawn from RE and lessons are structured so that all can participate effectively. Teaching assistants support pupils well and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are able to access the learning as a result. Tasks are not always hard enough to challenge the higher attaining pupils. Displays celebrate the work of all children and reflect positive images of diversity.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- developing the use made of levels in planning
- providing more opportunities for extended writing in RE.

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 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

Jacqueline K Wordsworth  
Her Majesty's Inspector