

Alexandra House  
33 Kingsway  
London  
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404040  
F 020 7421 6855  
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)



23 June 2008

Mrs T Ireland  
Headteacher  
Regents Park Primary School  
Arthur Road  
Birmingham  
B10 0NJ

Dear Mrs Ireland

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Religious Education

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 17 June 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 creative thinking 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. 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 lessons.

The overall effectiveness of RE was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

The standards reached by pupils in RE are in line with the expectations in the agreed syllabus, reflecting good achievement overall.

- In the Foundation Stage, pupils are able to talk sensitively and with respect about aspects of religion, such as the various special celebrations of Eid, Diwali and Christmas, and they can relate these to their own experiences. They understand that religion is diverse and recognise, for example, that people have different ideas about God.
- By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils have an increasing understanding that personal experiences and feelings can influence their attitudes and actions and those of others. They respond well to stories of kindness or

bravery and are able to talk about the value of saying sorry and they are beginning to understand the concept of forgiveness.

- By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils have developed a good understanding of beliefs and practices in the religions studied. For example, they are able to use the correct words to describe their understanding of some of the Islamic symbols that express faith in Allah. In one lesson, pupils made good progress in understanding that music can evoke powerful emotions during worship. In particular, pupils were able to use this knowledge to write both music and words for an Islamic song and a lyric for a Gospel song. Pupils are less adept in their use of analysis and evaluation when investigating religious material.
- RE makes an impressive contribution to pupils' wider personal development. They show curiosity about, and reflect seriously on, life's fundamental questions, showing an excellent respect of other people's cultures. In particular, they demonstrate a growing understanding of some of the contemporary challenges to religious belief. Pupils enjoy RE, as evidenced by their very positive comments. As one said, 'RE is a very important lesson.'

### Quality of teaching and learning

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

- Teaching is stimulating and challenging, stemming from excellent subject knowledge. Teachers plan interesting and sometimes challenging lessons. Pupils respond positively to this challenge, often persevering even when the tasks are demanding, and require a great deal of thought. 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 music in worship, was of a high standard.
- Lessons are well-structured with the teaching securing the active involvement of all pupils in their learning. Teaching methods are well selected and time is used productively for independent and collaborative work. Effective use is made of questioning and exposition.
- Relationships with pupils are excellent creating an atmosphere of trust and respect. There are high expectations about both behaviour and learning.
- Assessment opportunities are planned for the end of each unit but the tasks set do not always allow pupils to demonstrate what they know and can do.

### Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum in RE is good.

- The curriculum is imaginative and sometimes demanding. Great care has been taken to ensure that units of work build on each other

extending the level of challenge. Detailed individual lesson plans are informed by the comprehensive schemes of work. Overall, schemes of work take good account of the Birmingham agreed syllabus and are flexible enough to meet the needs of pupils.

- The practice of blocking RE units of work is proving effective in delivering some high quality work. This is helping to secure integration with other areas of the curriculum, for example in history with work on immigration and a unit of work on people who have changed the world.
- There is excellent enrichment of the RE curriculum through visits to places of worship, participation in local competitions, effective links with other subjects and use of visiting speakers.

## Leadership and management

Leadership and management of RE are good.

- The subject leader is highly committed and knowledgeable. There is a drive for improvement and a strong sense of direction. RE has a high profile in the life of the school and in the eyes of the pupils.
- RE makes an excellent contribution to the school's overall ethos, resulting in the enrichment of pupils' wider personal development.
- The subject is well resourced and displays promote a very positive and exciting approach to learning. There is good access to information communication technology (ICT) to support teaching.
- The roles and responsibilities for RE are clear, with informal strategies in place to monitor and evaluate the provision supported by the school's practice of having a member of the senior leadership team shadowing and working alongside the subject leader. However, there is scope to extend the assessment arrangements further to provide a more rigorous basis for the process of self-evaluation of the subject.

## Creative thinking in RE

RE benefits from the use of a range of imaginative and engaging approaches to learning. Pupils have good opportunities to express their responses to their learning in RE in a variety of creative ways. However, at present more challenging thinking skills are not being used consistently in all areas of the work. The school is well advanced in its thinking about creative ways of organising the RE curriculum. The use of more blocked timetabling of the subject is making a positive contribution to improving the provision and raising standards in the subject.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- developing the use made of higher order thinking skills in RE
- improving and refining the assessment practices 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 Wordsworth  
Her Majesty's Inspector