

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)



03 August 2009

Mrs J Appleton  
Headteacher  
Meadowbank Primary School  
Councillor Lane  
Cheadle  
Cheshire  
SK8 2LE

Dear Mrs Appleton

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Religious Education

Thank you for your hospitality and help, and that of your staff and children, during my visit on 23 June 2009 to look at work in religious education (RE).

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of the subject the visit had a particular focus on the 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, presentations by pupils, 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

The achievement of pupils in RE is good.

- The standards reached by pupils by the end of Key Stage 1 are broadly in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. By the end of Key Stage 2 while standards are in line overall, in some regards they exceed expectations. This pattern of attainment in RE represents good achievement by the pupils across all the ability range including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage pupils make good progress in exploring relevant aspects of their experience and begin to use simple religious language appropriately. For example, as part of a topic on

creation, pupils are able to explore aspects of the natural world which have significance for them and can consider how these might relate to the idea of God. Throughout Key Stage 1 pupils develop their knowledge and understanding of features of religion making links between these and their own experience. They begin to understand how aspects of religion relate to each another and recognise how important these can be in different people's lives. For example, pupils spoke with confidence about the festival of Divali and recognised the way different people celebrate key milestones in their lives.

- By the end of Key Stage 2 most pupils have developed a strong framework of understanding about religion. This enables them to identify and discuss some of the key issues raised by their study. For example, pupils in Year 6 were asking some very perceptive questions about the origin and value of religion. Pupils are also able to offer their own reflections on some of the more profound issues raised by human experience when, for example, exploring the lives of people who have had an impact on the world.
- On some occasions, pupils do not have enough opportunities to link together the two areas of attainment in RE, learning 'about' and 'from' religion, while in the final two years of Key Stage 2 pupils do not fully extend their insight into key beliefs and practices of Christianity.
- The subject makes a very strong contribution to the pupils' personal development. Throughout their time in school pupils develop a range of the more demanding skills of the subject including the ability to enquire into and interpret religious ideas. The subject also makes an important contribution to the development of pupils' wider learning and oracy skills. They show an enthusiasm for, and interest in, exploring religion and beliefs and recognise the value of the subject. They have good opportunities to reflect on their experience and develop a respect for the beliefs and lifestyle of others including an understanding of the important role which religion and belief can play in people's lives.

## Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning in RE is good.

- Teachers bring a good understanding of the subject to their teaching together with a confident ability to structure pupils' learning to enable them to make progress. All the lessons seen were of good quality. Good use was made of in-class support and this made a significant contribution to the pupils' progress.
- Planning is a strength; learning objectives are clear and appropriate, usually, though not always, securing a good balance between learning 'about' and 'from' religion. A strong emphasis is placed on encouraging pupils to ask their own questions and, as they grow older, develop their own lines of enquiry in RE. Teachers use questioning well to focus and extend learning and to check on the progress pupils are making. Activities are designed to ensure pupils of all abilities can make good progress.

- A range of engaging activities are used in RE including information and communication technology (ICT), visits, drama, role play, writing poetry and art. These are carefully planned to ensure they support pupils' learning and secure their enthusiasm and interest in the subject. Effective use is made a wide range of more challenging skills, such as speculation, interpretation and evaluation, to promote progress.
- RE displays around the school support and celebrate the pupils' achievements. In addition the school has developed very impressive arrangements to record pupils' success through the use of photo-books and extensive portfolios of photographs and pupils' work. One of the delights of the inspection was the opportunity the school provided for pupils to bring examples of their work to explain their learning.
- Pupils' work is marked routinely and carefully with helpful comments indicating what they have achieved. In many cases these comments include suggestions about how to improve to which pupils often respond readily setting up a dialogue with their teachers about their work.

### Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum in RE is good.

- The provision for RE meets statutory requirements and the school has been effective in using, adapting and extending the locally agreed syllabus and guidance materials from the local authority.
- A range of different approaches are used in the delivery of RE. Some links have been made to broader topics when, for example, work on Hinduism was linked to a topic on India. On other occasions RE is delivered more discretely but with a careful eye towards ways in which the subject can link to other areas of learning. A very strong and appropriate emphasis is placed in the planning on the way the subject can support and promote pupils' wider learning skills.
- The school has recognised that, as it moves further down the road of exploring a more creative model for the curriculum, there are opportunities for further innovation in the way RE is delivered. Emerging use is being made of key concepts and questions to help organise and focus the curriculum in RE, and there is scope to take this further.
- On occasions the RE planning does not capture opportunities to integrate the two areas of learning in RE – learning 'about' and 'from' religion. The school also recognises that the pattern of RE topics in Years 5 and 6 needs to be re-balanced slightly to give the pupils more opportunities to extend and deepen their understanding of the Christian tradition.
- There are positive opportunities for enrichment activities to extend pupils' learning in RE. There are regular visits to the local church and opportunities for pupils to meet with representatives of different faiths. The RE action plan includes a focus on extending and structuring this pattern of enrichment.

- The assessment arrangements for the subject are also good. A simple, manageable and realistic set of procedures are in place to evaluate and record pupil' progress against well-defined learning objectives. The development of portfolios of evidence exemplifying performance against the levels of attainment adds further support to the process. The procedures are being implemented consistently across the school.

## Leadership and management

The leadership and management of RE are good with some outstanding features.

- The subject leadership is in transition. The out-going subject leader is very experienced with a highly effective level of RE expertise. This has been used very skilfully to develop the curriculum and assessment in RE; to support teachers to achieve a strong level of consistency in planning and delivery; and, secure a high profile for the subject in the school. The newly appointed leader is benefiting from a carefully managed process of succession planning using RE to model aspects of good practice in subject leadership.
- The leadership in the school has a clear vision for the subject recognising the way it can contribute to, and benefit from, the wider priorities of promoting pupils' learning, personal development and well-being. Good use has been made of the support provided by the local authority both in terms of guidance materials and the RE network groups.
- The arrangements for monitoring the subject are robust and have been applied extensively. As a result the subject leaders have made an accurate assessment of the development priorities for RE linked to a clear and well-targeted review and improvement plan. There is scope to include slightly more emphasis on pupils' achievement in RE within the monitoring and review process.

## Creative thinking in RE

The use made of creative thinking in RE is good. Throughout, there is an emphasis on encouraging pupils to develop their skills of enquiry and reflection within RE. Teachers seek out opportunities to challenge pupils to think for themselves and draw their own conclusions about their learning in an open investigative way. At the same time good use is made of a range of creative activities to provide pupils with opportunities to express their own personal responses to their learning in RE. The school has been seeking ways of involving RE within its more creative thinking about the curriculum and has recognised the scope to take this further.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring that the two areas of attainment, learning 'about' and 'from' religion, are integrated more effectively in the planning, building on the good practice that already exists
- developing a stronger focus on key concepts and questions when planning RE, again building on the existing good practice
- extending the opportunities for upper Key Stage 2 pupils to extend and deepen their understanding of the Christian tradition.

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

Alan Brine  
Her Majesty's Inspector