
Decision Maker: Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education

Date: 30 May 2012

Decision Type: Non-Urgent Non-Executive Non-Key

Title: SCHOOL VISITS

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Ward: N/A

1. INFORMATION

- 1.1 It was decided at the Spring term meeting that the RE Consultant would not be undertaking any visits during the next two terms and that other members would continue to visit schools.
- 1.2 The Chair has contacted members who might be able to lead visits to 3 schools during the Summer and Autumn terms. This will be discussed at the meeting.
- 1.3 The RE Consultant and two members carried out a visit on 6 February 2012 to Balgowan Primary School and the report is attached.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 2.1 **Members to volunteer to attend visits in the Summer and Autumn Terms, dates to be advised at the meeting.**

Visit to Balgowan Primary School on 6th February 2102

This visit was undertaken by the Religious Education Adviser, Mrs. Penny Smith-Orr, and two members of SACRE, Cllr Manning and Cllr Adams. We were met by the RE coordinator Mrs Spencer and the Deputy Head teacher Mr Hines. Balgowan is one of the biggest Primary schools with a three form entry and 650 pupils in the school. The catchment area is very small, between .2 and .4 of a mile which makes it a very local community school and despite the number of pupils the atmosphere is very friendly and welcoming. The school motto 'Be kind, work hard, make friends' was on display all over the school and was clearly being adhered to during our morning visit. There are pupils from many different faith groups in the school and on a tour of the school we saw some excellent displays on the theme of RE.

We went to a Year 2 lesson and saw them discussing the Buddhist story of Prince Siddhatha and the swan with Mrs. Harrison. The pupils had some very interesting ideas to share on the reasons for the actions of the characters and then went to write about the story. The Reception classes were having an Indian cultural day and among the many activities we saw pupils trying on saris, colouring mendhi patterns and Indian flags and cooking Indian food. The school runs a very creative curriculum and has found that these 'immersion' days are very good for the pupils learning.

Later a Year 6 lesson on Hinduism, led by Mrs Gilbert, started with a look at home shrines. The discussion led on to how religious signs and symbols can be seen all around us and finished with the pupils thinking of their own 'blessings' which they wrote on leaf shapes to hang on a tree in the classroom.

Collective Worship is organised in family groupings and held three times in order for all pupils to take part. We observed the Head Teacher, Dr Swatland, presenting ideas on Respect to one set of pupils. They all joined in with singing and were happy to answer questions and put their own ideas forward. An activity using Smarties was used to illustrate that we are all the same while also being individuals, and they finished with a prayer.

Finally we had a discussion with Mrs Spencer and Mr Hines on how RE is organised and how they have developed assessment strategies for teachers to use. A survey has been carried out on how the pupils feel about RE and this has been incorporated into the comprehensive action plan for the subject. Mrs Spencer had also made a list of the strengths of RE in the school which was very impressive. We also had an opportunity to look at the work scrutiny folders that she has made. They have a range of resources within the school and also use the multi cultural resources from the EDC. They use the children as a resource and asked for information about visitors from other faiths.

This was a very lovely visit to a school where RE is clearly taken very seriously as a major part of the school curriculum.