

# Learning Outside the Classroom

## Exploring a nineteenth century synagogue to learn about twenty-first century Judaism

Pupils from St Stephen's RC Primary School, Droylsden discover about Jewish faith and life. Manchester Jewish Museum, 190 Cheetham Hill Rd, Manchester M8 8LW

### What were we trying to achieve?

- to enrich and deepen children's understanding through direct engagement with Jewish beliefs and life
- to explore religious artefacts and understand the links between practice and belief

### Cost:

£2.95 per child and a £10 booking fee (2008) and includes the services of the education officer and activity sheets. Accompanying adults are free. Other costs were insurance and transport.

### Who went? How many?

Twenty five Year 3 class participated in the half day visit. Their teacher was assisted by two classroom support assistants. The education officer led the activities while at the museum.

### Preparation:

Children were well prepared for their visit having spent some time in the classroom learning about Jewish beliefs and worship.

### How did we organise the learning?

The one and a half hour session was introduced with a question and answer slot. As a result of the classroom preparation, children responded to questions enthusiastically. There followed a demonstration and explanation of some artefacts. Children were then able to explore the museum using self-guiding activity sheets and were assisted by staff. Of particular interest was the range of *Torah* scrolls in the Ark. Pupils relished the opportunity to dress in a *tallith* and *kippah*. Displays in the gallery offered insights into Jewish life in Manchester a hundred years ago, so giving a dimension of local history to the visit. The afternoon concluded with children participating in a demonstration of *Shabbat* activities.

### What was the impact of the experience?

Teachers are convinced this visit gives pupils an opportunity to experience a different faith and culture from their own, so widening their horizons and understanding. The children certainly enjoyed the chance to learn outside the classroom. 'We've been learning about the Jewish people. But now we know more about what they're like because we can see and ask things.' Another pupil added, 'You do work at school and you do work here but this is more of a big place. You get to look at the things and wear the special clothes.' Many of the children were fascinated by seeing full size *Torah* scrolls and made the link with their religious significance. 'It's the first part of the Bible, but it's in Hebrew.'

### Follow up:

During the following week, a display table was set up in the classroom. The class discussed what they saw and learned. They led an assembly, sharing their experiences with other children in the school. Pupils in Year 3 started a 'world faith book' to keep a record of their exploration of faith and their feelings through their time at the school.

### Contacts and links:

Manchester Jewish Museum, 190 Cheetham Hill Rd, Manchester M8 8LW. 0161-834 9879

[www.manchesterjewishmuseum.com](http://www.manchesterjewishmuseum.com)

[www.st-stephens-droylsden.tameside.sch.uk](http://www.st-stephens-droylsden.tameside.sch.uk)