

Learning Outside the Classroom

Gaining first hand understanding of Christians and Muslims in Kirklees

Pupils explore for themselves how people of faith make a difference in the community

What were we trying to achieve?

For pupils to enrich their understanding of religion through:

- direct dialogue and conversation with believers
- exploration of global and local issues, specifically the impact of poverty researching how believers respond to local and global needs
- an awareness of the atmosphere and feel in places of worship

Cost:

Visits to any of the seven faith centres are free to Kirklees schools There is a £100 charge for schools from elsewhere. Voluntary contributions of £4 covered insurance and transport.

Who went? How many?

All Year 8 pupils accompanied by two teachers and two trainees. Half the day was spent in Dewsbury Minster, the other half at Heckmondwike mosque.

Preparation:

This was part of an ongoing programme of learning outside the classroom at the school. RE is also enriched through visits to other places of worship and a visit to the Holocaust Centre in Nottinghamshire.

How did we organise the learning?

Pupils explored issues of global and local poverty. They played a fair trade game and participated in a quiz which considered the extent of poverty in the local community and worldwide. They searched for evidence of how Christians responded to problems and needs and explored the Minster in pairs. They were encouraged to look for evidence of this in the refectory, shop, notice boards and the church itself and quizzed local volunteers and visitors. This gave them a first hand engagement with believers and an opportunity to listen to their views.

At the mosque there was a focus on *zakah*, working in small groups to produce an advert for four Muslim charities. There were also workshops on *hajj* and prayer and an opportunity to try Islamic calligraphy.

What was the impact of the experience?

The head of RE is convinced that this visit has an important impact on pupils. 'Most definitely', she says. 'Many children have not been in such places of worship and it broadens their perspective of that faith and the believers.' Pupils agreed, feeling that they benefit especially from the direct interaction with people of faith. This can be summed up in two such comments, 'It's better to look round and discover things for yourself rather than just finding them from a book' and 'You get experience of the way people of different beliefs think and of how they feel in this place.'

Follow up:

Back in school pupils took part in an evaluation session. This is regarded as an essential part of the RE experience. 'Some of the insights students bring out in the classroom could never be gained from looking at a textbook or pictures. They pick up on the very little things that a teacher might not realise they'd seen or experienced. It's very important they can share that in the classroom.'

Contacts and links:

www.interfaithkirklees.org.uk

www.dewsburyminster.org.uk