

# Learning Outside the Classroom

## When Strangers become Friends (2)

Encountering people of faith

The Sikh Gurdwara and Sinai Reform Synagogue, Leeds

### What are we trying to achieve?

Participants were given the opportunity to:

- engage in dialogue in relation to matters of faith and belief, both within and across, faith boundaries.
- experience listening to music in the *diwan*, eating food in the *langar* at the gurdwara, writing Hebrew and examining Jewish artefacts
- compare and contrast two places of worship and their holy books

**Cost:** Travel costs and donation to places of worship

### Who is involved?

150 pupils with a wide range of abilities, mostly from years 5 and 6 with 50 teachers, teaching assistants and other adults. Pupils were drawn from eight schools in rural and urban locations, mono and multicultural settings.

### Preparation:

A working group of teachers met to carry out detailed planning regarding risk assessment and activities. All participants were briefed regarding dress and protocols at both places of worship and staff explained about food in the *langar*. Each school was allocated a partner with whom they worked on some activities.

### How did we organise the learning?

The day began at the gurdwara and focused on respect for difference. After covering heads and removing shoes, pupils silently entered the *diwan* hall, bowing as a mark of respect to the *Guru Granth Sahib*. After a brief introduction, pupils had an opportunity to ask questions. During this time, they witnessed worshippers enter the *diwan* hall, bow in front of the *Guru Granth Sahib*, make an offering, and receive *karah prashad*. They experienced the musicians playing and singing a Sikh hymn before being invited to look closely at the holy book. Lunch was eaten in the *langar* where everyone sat on the floor to eat. Served joyfully by members of the gurdwara, this experience gave the children an opportunity to think about the meaning of service. Although the food was very different from their normal diet, many welcomed a second helping.

Sinai Synagogue is within a short distance of the gurdwara. Some pupils were invited by the rabbi to help undress the Torah scroll, the remaining children were able to go up to the *bimah* in small groups to examine the scroll more closely. Using a simplified Hebrew alphabet sheet, those waiting worked with partners to create bookmarks on which they wrote their partner's name and created some decoration. The completed bookmarks were then presented to their partners.

### What was the impact of the experience?

There were specific comments from pupils - particularly about the food and that they were pleased that they were meeting up with friends made from the previous visit.

### Follow up:

Schools were given some follow up suggestions which asked pupils to complete a Start of David diagram which focused on important aspects of Jewish worship (AT1) and things that are important to the pupils (AT2) Some schools had made some informal links and arranged a very successful bridge building weekend at a residential centre in Whitby.

### Contacts and links:

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