

Learning Outside the Classroom

Widening horizons of understanding

Exploring different faiths in one community

What were we trying to achieve?

- to build on the school's work on community cohesion
- to enrich and encourage pupils to learn from different religions, beliefs, values and traditions while exploring their own beliefs and questions of meaning

Cost:

Organised through Bradford Interfaith Education Centre, the visit to the Hindu temple cost £3 per child with additional transport costs.

Who went? How many?

Fifty children from Years 3 and 4 participated in a series of visits. They were accompanied by three teachers. The school has a specialist hearing impaired unit and support staff also joined the trip to enable all children to benefit in full.

Preparation:

The school includes children from many different faiths, cultures and ethnic backgrounds who are used to working and learning together in school. However, the children have little external experience outside their own circle. There was detailed pre-visit preparation so that children were clear about behaviour and etiquette in the temple and were ready with questions and ideas.

How did we organise the learning?

The Hindu faith tutor greeted the children at the temple. She helped pupils gain a feel for the sacred space and showed them some of the colourful and symbolic deities. With some structured guidance, children then had time to explore for themselves. In the final session they drew up questions in small groups and discussed similarities and differences with the other places they had visited. Just before they left the *mandir*, as a gift they were given a taste of *prasad*.

A key aim of the *Learning Outside the Classroom* manifesto is to 'make learning more engaging and relevant'. Children put this in their own way. 'You get more education than sitting in classrooms. You get to interact with everything. You know how to do it rather than just studying it.'

What was the impact of the experience?

The life and symbolism of a Hindu temple provided much stimulation and children were able to reflect on the meaning of the deities. 'I like the one with Rama, Sita and Lakshman because it shows that people are one big community.' Another pupil was inspired by Hanuman. 'I liked the monkey because it was about helping other people and it made me think about helping others.'

The Interfaith tutor made the point that, 'You can get so much more from a place that is live and running than you can in a classroom. The impact on the children today will be fresh for ever, I hope!'

Follow up:

Children were able to compare the faiths and cultures they had experienced. Pupils noted the variety of customs, the different significance of sacred texts, and how gender roles differed. Above all, the series of trips meant that RE was given a real human context for further learning.

Contacts and links:

Bradford Interfaith Education Centre, Listerhills Road, Bradford, BD7 1HD. Tel: 01274 731674

<http://www.bradfordschools.net/content/view/548/542/>