

Connecting RE and British Values: MP Dennis Skinner comes to school

Julie Dunbar is Head Teacher at Stretton Handley CE (VC) Primary School in Derbyshire. She wanted all her pupils to connect their work on British Values with their RE and with the values the school promotes. She used an activity from the book *RE and British Values* (2015, Birmingham: RE Today).

RE, although an amazing and interesting subject in itself, can also be a vehicle to explore and contribute to our understanding of what it is to be British, alongside what it means to be Christian, Sikh, Hindu or Muslim, for example, and to embrace and understand how our values, Christian or simply human, have such a significant impact on our lives and our choices. Our school motto is 'growing, caring and learning together', and it underpins our approach. The display board in the picture draws together work the school has undertaken under the banner of RE and British Values. The children have had the opportunity to explore the similarities as well as differences between different faiths; for example, many of our children did not realise that Muslims believe in Jesus, but as a Prophet not as God. They had not noticed that the 'Golden Rule' about treating others as they would like to be treated is found in many religions and beliefs.

Out and about with Sikhs and Muslims

We took children on a multifaith trail around Derby, which enabled children to think about what being British means and to learn about the diversity of faiths within Britain. They discovered that many religions have many values in common. We used the blue and red paper prompts for the Union Jack flag that you can see in the photo of our British Values display. The Union Jack is made up of torn coloured paper with comments from all our children. On the blue paper they wrote 'I am unique. I am one in a million because ...' On the red paper, they wrote: 'This is something that makes me proud of Britain ...' You could use white rectangles too, to elicit comments about sayings of Jesus, or from other sacred texts: 'Jesus said, "Blessed are the Peacemakers." I think ...', or 'Gandhi said, "Be the change you want to see in the world." I think ...'



Dennis Skinner MP (centre) with the children of Stretton Handley CE (VC) Primary School

The board contains photos of our whole-school visit to the places of worship in Derby as well as letters to our local MP, Dennis Skinner, who was so impressed that he visited us.

Our school produced a video for the competition What Makes our Church of England School Special (available at www.youtube.com/watch?v=JU-zAuwHiGE&feature=youtu.be). The National Society's competition-winning video was about our school's Christian values. The prize was a visit to the House of Lords, and the display board shows children having tea there with the Bishop of Oxford. This is another example of the link between our RE and British Values work. We showed our interest in democracy, and learned a lot. Those who went on the visit presented their learning to other pupils when they got back.

The British Value of democracy was then explored in various ways, including voting

and campaigning to be members of the School Council and writing to Mr Skinner about various local issues. He was impressed with the children's questions and ideas and that led to his visit to the school. He talked to the children about his life and how he was inspired to become an MP. He also spoke about 'being true to yourself', 'standing up for what you believe' and 'not giving up'. He answered children's questions, including what had he achieved that made him most proud. The discussion and follow-up work connected RE and British Values, as children linked ideas with Christian values of perseverance, courage, hope and peace. They have had the opportunity to grow in self-awareness and awareness of others and the world around them.

Our SIAMS inspection report left us very happy with the 'outstanding' outcome.

Julie Dunbar

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