

## **The Right to Withdraw from Religious Studies**

The national curriculum states the legal requirement that:

'Every state-funded school must offer a curriculum which is balanced and broadly based, and which:

- promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils
- prepares pupils at the school for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life.
- All state schools ... must teach religious education ... All schools must publish their curriculum by subject and academic year online'.

(National Curriculum in England: Framework Document, DfE, September 2013, p.4)

Although there is not a National Curriculum for RS, all maintained schools must follow the National Curriculum requirements to teach a broad and balanced curriculum, which includes RS. All maintained schools therefore have a statutory duty to teach RS. In the UK, the law does not prescribe how Religious Studies should be taught or organised in schools, only that schools should bear in mind that the way RS is taught should reflect the agreed syllabus of the Local Authority and the ethos of the school, as well as ensuring that students make good progress in the subject.

Here at the The Weald, we intend to encourage students to be critical but positive and contributing members of society, developing an understanding of those who hold different beliefs to them and the value of these beliefs, to both the believer and wider society, in order to help them reflect on their own identity, ethos and character (beliefs and morals). This links to the concepts of respect and tolerance: key British values. Central to this is understanding the links between different beliefs, links between beliefs and practices and the variety within or between religious traditions. Skills required to communicate this learning would ideally involve using key vocabulary to accurately explain concepts and evaluate their value. This is our RS curriculum intent.

The RS curriculum is determined by the local Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE), which is responsible for producing the locally agreed syllabus for RS.

In brief, legislation relevant to maintained schools states:

- In maintained community, foundation or voluntary schools without a religious character, RS is taught in accordance with the local agreed syllabus;
- The requirements are that a syllabus must 'reflect the fact that the religious traditions in Great Britain are, in the main, Christian while taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain'.

### **Right to Withdraw:**

Parents/carers have the right to choose whether to withdraw their child from RS without influence from the school, although a school should ensure parents or carers are informed of this right and are aware of the educational objectives and content of the RS syllabus. If students are withdrawn from RS, schools have a duty to supervise them, though not to provide additional teaching or to incur extra cost; suitable work relating to the child's religious education should be provided by the parents/carers. Students will usually remain on school premises, unless the child is lawfully receiving religious education elsewhere. You cannot withdraw your child from RS because you wish for them to prioritise other subjects or homework during school hours.

## Withdrawal Procedure:

If a parent/carer chooses to withdraw their child from RE, they need to:

- Inform the school of their request for their child to be withdrawn from RS and whether they intend partial or total withdrawal for their child using the following form:  
[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScSGZYwjrtPuYHOMqVxTbgNWNtq132A1Mg3xANWL4oG5lk\\_dg/viewform?usp=sharing&oid=105363036756982634662](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScSGZYwjrtPuYHOMqVxTbgNWNtq132A1Mg3xANWL4oG5lk_dg/viewform?usp=sharing&oid=105363036756982634662)
- Once we have reviewed your request, you may be asked to write a formal letter to the Head of Curriculum & Deputy Headteacher, Miss Sorrell ([zsorrell@theweald.org.uk](mailto:zsorrell@theweald.org.uk)) stating your wish to withdraw and your reasons why.
- Parents/carers may be invited to meet with the Subject Leader for RS and/or the Head of Year, and if necessary, a Deputy Headteacher, to establish with the school their concerns about RS and to discuss the practical implication of withdrawal.
- It is not envisaged that establishing the reason for withdrawal and practicalities of withdrawal from RS be either lengthy or a means to change a parent's/carer's mind, but a meeting with the relevant staff may be necessary to ensure parents/carers have all relevant and adequate information to make an informed choice.
- Parents/carers of withdrawn children will be asked to provide suitable alternative work of a religious nature for their child, to be completed at the time of the RS lesson. It will not be the responsibility of the teacher either to set or mark alternative work. Students who have been withdrawn will be allocated to different classes or a specified place on an independent basis in order to ensure suitable supervision. These arrangements may need to change from week to week.
- In addition to the above, parents/carers also have the right to opt out of any visits to places of worship. Prior notification will be necessary to ensure adequate supervision is organised for the student.
- If a student is only to be partially withdrawn from RS lessons that discuss a specific religion or issue, it cannot be guaranteed that reference to these religions or issues will not be made in more general lessons.

Whilst The Weald respects the rights of the parents/carers to withdraw their child from RS, these rights do not apply to a parent's/carer's request to withdraw their child from a non-RS subject that may teach about religion or religious beliefs, e.g. History or English.