

SACRE Guidance on Withdrawal from RE

Legal Requirements

RE is for all pupils and every pupil is legally entitled to Religious Education as part of a 'broad and balanced' curriculum. RE must be provided for all registered pupils in state-funded schools in England (this includes sixth form pupils) unless they are withdrawn by their parents or have withdrawn themselves once reaching 18 years of age or older). Nursery pupils are not required to have compulsory RE teaching, although often there is good practice in this area seen in nursery classes. Special schools should teach RE to their pupils 'as far as is practicable'.

RE Curriculum

RE is locally determined, not nationally, and schools in Coventry and Warwickshire follow the Coventry and Warwickshire Agreed Syllabus, as recommended by SACRE. Schools must interact with the Agreed Syllabus in the following ways:

- All maintained schools without a religious character must follow the locally agreed syllabus.
- Voluntary controlled schools with a religious character should follow the locally agreed syllabus unless parents request RE in accordance with the trust deed or religious designation of their school.
- Voluntary aided schools with a religious character should provide RE in accordance with the trust deed or religious designation of their school unless parents request the locally agreed syllabus and an overseeing body such as the local diocese may provide support.
- RE is compulsory for all pupils in academies and free schools as set out in their funding agreements. This is a contractual responsibility. Academies can choose to use the Coventry and Warwickshire Agreed Syllabus, a different locally agreed syllabus (it is important you gain permission of the SACRE concerned) or may choose to devise their own RE curriculum.

Withdrawal from RE

Parental right of withdrawal from RE was first granted in 1944 when curricular RE was called 'Religious Instruction' and, as such, had connotations of induction into the Christian faith. RE is very different now. It takes account of world faiths and non-religious world views so that children can learn about and from religious traditions without being inducted into those traditions. In the UK, 70+ years later, parents still have the right to withdraw their children from RE on the grounds that they wish to provide their own RE. This RE provision will be the parents' responsibility. This right of withdrawal exists for all pupils in all types of school, including schools that do and do not have a religious designation. Students who are aged 18 or over also have the right to withdraw themselves from RE. Parents can also exercise the right to withdraw their child from part of RE, and can do so without giving any explanation.

Teachers also have the right to withdraw from the teaching of RE. However, this does not apply to teachers who have been specifically employed to teach or lead RE. If a teacher does wish to withdraw from the teaching of RE, a letter requesting this must be submitted to the head of the school and its chair of governors. If a teacher withdraws from the teaching of RE, the school must still make provisions for the pupils to receive their entitlement regarding RE.