

Right to withdraw from Religious Education

Introduction

“All students are entitled to receive RE as part of a broad and balanced curriculum at school which promotes their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development”

– Religious education in English schools: Non-statutory guidance 2010.

However, the law gives parents/carers the right to withdraw their child(ren) from collective acts of worship and/or Religious Education lessons, in accordance with the 1988 Education Reform Act. At AMVC we respect that right.

Parents who wish to withdraw their children from RE should be aware of its aims and what is covered in the RE curriculum and that they are given the opportunity to discuss this if they wish. It should be made clear whether the withdrawal is from the whole RE curriculum or specific parts of it. No reasons need be given.

Important - limitations to and managing the right to withdraw

- If students are withdrawn from RE, schools have a duty to supervise them, **though not to provide additional teaching**. A student may be required to work in another area of the school, such as library or pastoral hub, or allocated to different classes. These arrangements may need to change from week to week.
- Whilst parents or carers have a right to withdraw children from RE, **they should note that children may also encounter religions and beliefs and wider aspects of faith in other areas of the curriculum from which there is no right of withdrawal**.
- On occasion, spontaneous questions about religious matters are raised by students or issues related to religion arise in other curriculum subjects such as history or citizenship (PSHE). For example, schools promote community cohesion and help students to understand ideas about identity and diversity, feelings and emotions within both religious and non-religious contexts.
- Where a request for withdrawal is made, the school must comply and excuse the student until the request is rescinded. Though not legally required, it is good practice for a head teacher to invite parents to discuss their written request.

(Section 71(3), School Standards and Framework Act 1998)

Procedure

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

- Inform the school of their request for their child(ren) to be withdrawn from RE and/or 'religious assembly' and whether they intend partial or total withdrawal for their child(ren). This should be either in person or in writing to the Head of College; verbal communication (e.g. on the telephone, through the student or a note in a student's planner) is not an adequate method.
- Parents/carers will be invited to meet with the Subject Leader for RE and/or the Head of Year, and if necessary, a Deputy Headteacher, to establish with the school their concerns about RE and to discuss the practical implication of withdrawal.
- At the meeting, the Agreed Syllabus and Schemes of Work will be made available for the parents to read and ask questions about, should they choose to.
- It is not envisaged that establishing the reason for withdrawal and practicalities of withdrawal from RE be either lengthy or a means to change parent's/carer's minds, but a meeting with the relevant staff is necessary to ensure parents/carers have all relevant and adequate information to make an informed choice.

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