

Right to Withdraw from Religious Education

Introduction

“All pupils 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 Hinguar Primary School and Nursery, we respect that right.

In the UK, the law does not prescribe how Religious Education should be taught or organised in schools, only that schools should bear in mind that the way RE is taught should reflect the agreed syllabus of the Local Authority and the ethos of the school, as well as ensuring that pupils make good progress, learning about and from the world around them and that Teaching Standards are adhered to. At Hinguar, we believe the RE curriculum fulfils this criteria.

Parental Right to Withdraw Children from RE

Parents/carers have the right to choose whether to withdraw their child from RE without influence from the school, although a school should ensure parents/carers are informed of this right and are aware of the educational objectives and content of the RE syllabus. If pupils are withdrawn from RE, schools have a duty to supervise them, though not to provide additional teaching or to incur extra cost; suitable work relating to the child's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.

Pupils will usually remain on school premises, unless they are lawfully receiving religious education elsewhere.

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- inform the school of their request for their child(ren) to be withdrawn from RE and/or 'religious assembly' and whether they intend partial or total withdrawal for their child(ren).

- o This should be either in person or in writing to the Headteacher; verbal communication (e.g. on the telephone, via the pupil or a note in a pupil's home/school diary) is not an adequate method.

- parents/carers will be invited to meet with the Headteacher to establish with the school their concerns about RE and to discuss the practical implication of withdrawal.

o At the meeting, the Agreed Syllabus and Scheme of Work will be made available for the parents/carers to read and ask questions about, should they choose to.

o 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 is 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(ren) to be completed at the time of the RE lesson. It will not be the responsibility of the teacher either to set or mark alternative work. Pupils who have been withdrawn will be allocated to a different class or a specified place on an independent basis to ensure suitable supervision. These arrangements may need to change from week to week.
- if a pupil is withdrawn from assembly, adequate supervision will be in place during the assembly. These arrangements may need to change from week to week.
- in addition to the above, parents/carers also have the right opt out of any visits to places of worship. Prior notification will be necessary to ensure adequate supervision is organised for the pupil.
- if a pupil is to be partially withdrawn from RE 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 Hinguar Primary School and Nursery respects the rights of 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.