

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 Ormiston Sir Stanley Matthews Academy, 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 Education Authority and the ethos of the school, as well as ensuring that students make good progress, learning about and from the world around them and that Teaching Standards are adhered to.

At OSSMA, 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 or carers are informed of this right and are aware of the educational objectives and content of the RE syllabus.

If students are withdrawn from RE, schools have a duty to supervise them, though not to provide additional teaching or to incur extra cost; suitable work relating to the child's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. Students will usually remain on school premises, unless the child is lawfully receiving religious education elsewhere.

Withdrawal 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- Inform the school of their request for their child(ren) to be withdrawn from RE and/or 'religious assembly' and whether they intend partial or total withdrawal for their child(ren)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 Principal; verbal communication (e.g. on the telephone, through the student or a note in a student's books) is not an adequate method.

- Parents/carers will be invited to meet with the Subject Leader for RE and/or a member of the senior leadership team, 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.

- 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. 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.
- If a student is withdrawn from assembly, they will be allocated to different classes on an independent basis in order to ensure adequate supervision 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 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 Ormiston Sir Stanley Matthews Academy 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.