



Guide to religious education in Suffolk Secondary Schools

Briefing paper from Suffolk SACRE

Overview

- RE is an important curriculum subject where students have the opportunity to study and understand the faith or belief of individuals and communities and how these may shape their culture and behaviour. This is an invaluable asset for children in modern day Britain.
- RE is statutory for all pupils in schools, including in the sixth form (except those withdrawn from lessons).
- RE must be taught to students in all schools including academies and free schools.
- Schools can choose the time allocation given to RE and how it is organised but when doing so should ensure students have time to be taught all of the content that is legally required.
- Schools must follow the Suffolk Locally Agreed Syllabus unless a Voluntary-Aided school of a religious character or an Academy (who still might choose to).
- In their school inspections, Ofsted can check whether RE is being delivered in accordance with the locally agreed syllabus, for schools of a non-religious nature. It has been the focus of some Deep Dives nationally.
- Schools are required to put the content of their RE curriculum, alongside all other subjects, on their school website.
- There is no legal requirement that pupils must sit public examinations in RE but many schools choose to recognise the work their students do by entering them into the Religious Studies GCSE. The numbers of pupils taking A Level Religious Studies has also risen.

1. Why study RE

- RE is an important curriculum subject. It is important in its own right and also makes a unique contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils and supports wider community cohesion. The Government is keen to ensure all pupils receive high-quality RE.
- Religious education for children and young people:

- Provokes challenging questions
- Encourages pupils to explore their own beliefs and worldviews
- Enables pupils to build their sense of identity and belonging
- Teaches pupils to develop respect for others
- Prompts pupils to consider their responsibilities
- RE has an important part to play as part of a broad, balanced and coherent curriculum to which all pupils are entitled.

2. The legal framework, rights & responsibilities

- Every maintained school in England must provide a basic curriculum (RE, sex education and the National Curriculum). This includes provision for RE for all registered pupils at the school (including those in the sixth form), except for those withdrawn by their parents (or withdrawing themselves if they are aged 18 or over).
- The key document in determining the teaching of RE is the locally agreed syllabus defined by the local LA (Suffolk). Schools designated as having a religious character are free to make their own decisions in preparing their syllabuses. In certain cases RE must be taught in accordance with the trust deed relating to the school:
 - **Community, foundation & voluntary-aided or voluntary-controlled schools without a religious character:** RE must be taught according to the Suffolk locally agreed syllabus.
 - **Foundation & voluntary-controlled schools with a religious character:** RE provision is to be provided in accordance with the locally agreed syllabus. However, if a parent requests for RE to be provided in accordance with the school's trust deed or order designating the school as having a religious character then arrangements must be made.
 - **Voluntary-aided schools with a religious character:** RE is to be determined by the governors and in accordance with the provisions of the trust deed relating to the school or the order designating the school as having a religious character. Parents can request for their child to receive RE in accordance with the locally agreed syllabus if they cannot reasonably or conveniently send their children to a school where the syllabus is in use.
 - **Academies (and Free Schools):** All academies are required, through their funding agreements, to teach RE.
 - For academies without a religious character, they may choose to adopt the locally agreed syllabus although can adopt a different area's syllabus or develop its own. If so, it must reflect that 'the religious traditions in Great Britain are, in the main, Christian whilst taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain'.

- For denominational academies with a religious character this will be in line with the denominational syllabus.
 - For non-denominational faith academies this can be either of the above.
- The legal requirements for the provision of RE in maintained schools do not specify any particular time allocation or how the curriculum should be organised.
- While schools are free to decide when and how subjects are taught and how much time is spent on each subject, they remain responsible for implementing the legally required syllabus (whether the locally agreed syllabus or their individual one) and for monitoring pupils' progress.
- Schools must state on their website the content of the school's curriculum each academic year; this includes Religious Education.

3. Inspections

- RE in accordance with the locally agreed syllabus in maintained schools is inspected by Ofsted in the course of the periodic inspection of a school (under Section 5 of the Education Act 2005). It is for the governing body of foundation and voluntary schools with a religious character to ensure that they are inspected at regular intervals (Section 48 of the Education Act 2005). This is equally true for academies.

4. The responsibilities of governors and headteachers

- Governing bodies and headteachers have the legal responsibilities to ensure that RE is provided as part of the school's basic curriculum, and that sufficient time and resources are given to RE to meet the statutory requirements.
- As well as fulfilling their legal obligations, the governing body and headteacher should also make sure that:
 - All pupils make progress in achieving the learning objectives of the RE curriculum
 - The subject is well led and effectively managed and that standards and achievement in RE and the quality of the provision are subject to regular and effective self-evaluation
 - Those teaching RE are suitably qualified and trained in the subject and have regular and effective opportunities for CPD
 - Teachers are aware of RE's contribution in developing pupils' understanding of religion and belief and its impact as part of the duty to promote community cohesion
 - Where appropriate, pupils have opportunities to take courses leading to an accredited qualification in the subject

- Teachers explore how new pedagogies and technology can be fully utilised to support RE learning objectives and promote community cohesion
- Clear information is provided for parents on the RE curriculum and the right to withdraw
- Teachers are aware that they do not have to teach RE unless specifically appointed to do so
- RE is resourced, staffed and timetabled so that the school can fulfil its legal obligations on RE and pupils can make good progress
- Where there are insufficient teachers in a school who are prepared to teach RE, the headteacher ensures that pupils receive their entitlement to RE.

5. The right to withdraw

- The parent of a pupil at a community, foundation or voluntary school has the right to request that the pupil be excused from all or part of the RE provided. They do not have to provide a reason and the school must comply with their request. Where a pupil has been withdrawn, the law provides for alternative arrangements to be made for RE of the kind the parent wants the pupil to receive.

The information in this document has been extracted from:

- Religious education (RE) and collective worship in academies and free schools
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/re-and-collective-worship-in-academies-and-free-schools/religious-education-re-and-collective-worship-in-academies-and-free-schools>
- Religious education in local-authority-maintained schools
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/190260/DCSF-00114-2010.pdf
- Religious Education and Collective Worship
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/281929/Collective_worship_in_schools.pdf
- What maintained schools must publish online
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/what-maintained-schools-must-publish-online#curriculum>

The current Suffolk Locally Agreed Syllabus can found here:

<https://www.suffolklearning.co.uk/leadership-staff-development/learning-teaching/religious-education>

If you have any queries about your school's delivery of RE or would value support in ensuring you are meeting the legal requirements, contact Suffolk SACRE on Linden.Pitcher@suffolk.gov.uk

Collective Worship

Every pupil in every school must also take part in a daily act of collective worship (unless the individual has been withdrawn). This is a statutory requirement in addition to, not instead of, studying Religious Education.

For more information on Collective Worship, read '*Guide to collective worship in Suffolk Secondary Schools*'.