



The right to withdraw from RE

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.

Schools should ensure that parents who want to withdraw their children from RE are aware that RE is taught in an objective way that is relevant to all pupils and respects their own personal beliefs. They should be made aware of the RE syllabus learning objectives and what is covered in the RE curriculum and should be given the opportunity to discuss this, if they wish. The school may also wish to review such a request each year, in discussion with the parents.

However, the right of withdrawal does not extend to other areas of the curriculum when, as may happen on occasion, spontaneous questions on religious matters are raised by pupils or there are issues related to religion that arise in other subjects such as history or citizenship.

The use of the right to withdraw should be at the instigation of parents (or pupils themselves if they are aged 18 or over), and it should be made clear whether it is from the whole of the subject or specific parts of it. No reasons need be given.

Parents have the right to choose whether or not 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. In this way, parents can make an informed decision. Where parents have requested that their child is withdrawn, their right must be respected, and where RE is integrated in the curriculum, the school will need to discuss the arrangements with the parents or carers to explore how the child's withdrawal can be best accommodated. If pupils are withdrawn from RE, schools have a duty to supervise them, though not to provide additional teaching or to incur extra cost. Pupils will usually remain on school premises.

Where a pupil has been withdrawn, the law provides for alternative arrangements to be made for RE of the kind the parent wants the pupil to receive (Section 71(3) of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998). This RE could be provided at the school in question, or the pupil could be sent to another school where suitable RE is provided if this is reasonably convenient. If neither approach is practicable, outside arrangements can be made to provide the pupil with the kind of RE that the parent wants, and the pupil may be withdrawn from school for a reasonable period of time to allow them to attend this external RE.

Parental rights and responsibilities

1. An unconditional right to withdraw their children from all or part of the religious education provided by the school in its basic curriculum. Parents do not have the right to request that work in another subject be done in place of religious education and they have a responsibility to provide alternative religious education for their child.
2. The right to a specific religious education for their children. It is the parents' responsibility to indicate what they wish this to be. It may be provided by the parents themselves, a faith community, another school or the school itself, depending on circumstances.

School responsibilities

1. To provide religious education for all registered pupils including those with special needs as part of the basic curriculum.
2. To facilitate the religious education desired by parents, as far as it is practicable.
3. To supervise children and young people adequately and to ensure that any entitlement does not negatively impact on attendance.
4. To inform SACRE of the withdrawal of children and young people.

(These guidelines are based on the [1996 Education Act](#), [1988 School Standards and Framework Act](#), [DFES circular 1/94](#).)