



Great Marlow School

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Religious Studies Withdrawal Policy

Recommended by the Leadership Team:

Dec 2023

Approved by Trustees' Policies Sub Committee/ Curriculum Committee:

Dec 2023

Ratified by Trustee Board/Board:

Dec 2023

Review Due:

Autumn Term 2024

Indicate as appropriate:

There **has not been** a change to the previous policy.

Policy on withdrawal from Religious Education

Introduction

“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 students and supports wider community cohesion.” – Department for Children, Schools and Families, *Religious education in English schools: Non-statutory guidance 2010*, p3.

At Great Marlow School, the purpose of RE reflects the agreed syllabus of the Local Education Authority and the ethos of the school. According to the Agreed Syllabus, there are two main purposes to RE: 1. So students can learn **about** religions and beliefs which have influenced the lives of millions of people and heavily influenced the development of different human cultures. This is developing their religious literacy, which is essential to understand the modern world; 2. So that students can reflect more deeply on their own and others’ sense of identity, meaning and purpose in life **from** their study of religion and belief. This develops their understanding of human values and mutual understanding¹. At Great Marlow School, we believe the RE curriculum fulfils these criteria. The approach we adopt is one of genuine open enquiry which respects the beliefs of all children.

Despite its importance in the basic curriculum for all schools, the law gives parents or carers² the right to withdraw their child(ren) from collective acts of religious worship and/or Religious Education lessons³. At Great Marlow School we respect that right.

Policy objectives

1. To ensure that parents or carers are aware they have the right to withdraw students from Religious Education classes and/or ‘religious’ assembly.
2. To ensure that when parent or carers or carers make a decision to withdraw students from either Religious Education classes and/or ‘religious’ assembly, they do so on the basis of an informed decision.
3. To ensure students receive a well-rounded education enabling them to progress and achieve their potential.

Parent or carer right to withdraw children from RE

Parents or 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 or carers 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 parent or carers or carers. Students will usually remain on school premises, unless the child is lawfully receiving religious education elsewhere.

¹ *Challenging RE 3: The Buckinghamshire Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education 2016-2021*, Buckinghamshire County Council, p8.

² In this document ‘parent or carer’ and ‘parent or careral responsibility’ relates to a child’s biological or legal parent or carers or carers, carers and/or legal guardians and the legal responsibilities they have for that child.

³ Section 71 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, as amended.

Whilst Great Marlow School respects the rights of the parents or carers to withdraw their child(ren) from RE, these rights do not apply to a parent or 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.⁴

Withdrawal procedure

- If a parent or 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). This should be either in person or in writing to the Headteacher. Verbal communication (e.g. on the telephone or through the student) or a note in the student's diary/planner are not adequate methods.
- Parent or carers will be invited to meet with the Head of RE and the Director of Learning, and possibly a member of the Senior Leadership Team, to establish with the school their concerns about RE and to discuss the practical implications of withdrawal. At the meeting, the Buckinghamshire Agreed Syllabus, School RE Programme of Study and Schemes of Work will be made available for the parent or carers 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 or carers or carers' minds, but a meeting with the relevant staff is necessary to ensure parent or carers or carers have all relevant and adequate information to make an informed decision. Parents or carers do not have to disclose their reason(s) for withdrawing their child from RE, but it is helpful for the school and subject leader to understand the reasons for the withdrawal so they may seek to improve religious education provision at the school.
- The responsibility for what goes on when the student is withdrawn and under the supervision of the school lies ultimately with the parents or carers. Parents or carers of withdrawn children will be asked to provide suitable alternative work for their child/children which has clear outcomes and is connected to the faith/philosophy of the parent or carers or carers, 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. The time when the student is withdrawn is intended for the delivery of the basic curriculum for RE and not the National Curriculum or other aspects of the curriculum.
- Students who have been withdrawn will be allocated to different rooms 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, the Form Tutor and Director of Learning will also be informed to ensure adequate supervision during the assembly.
- In addition to the above, parents or carers also have the right to opt out of any visits to places of worship. Prior notification will be necessary to ensure adequate supervision is organised for the student.

Review of a request to withdraw

The school may wish to review a request each year, in discussion with the parents or carers or carers.⁵

⁴ *Religious education in English schools: Non-statutory guidance 2010*, Department for Children, Schools and Families, pp27-29.

⁵ This is in accordance with *Religious education in English schools: Non-statutory guidance 2010*, Department for Children, Schools and Families, pp27-28.