

# Royal Borough of Greenwich SACRE

Standing Advisory Council in Religious Education

## Multifaith Guidelines



# Royal Borough of Greenwich

## Multifaith Guidelines

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## Introduction

Through their ethos, the taught curriculum, everyday aspects of school life and the varied opportunities that they offer, schools introduce their pupils and their pupils' families to the experiences and heritages of the wider community in which they are placed. The Royal Borough of Greenwich is fortunate to be populated by a vibrant multi-faith and multicultural community, where whilst some groups are recent arrivals to this country, others have been established for many years or centuries. Schools are often in the position of also introducing their pupils and their families to the excitement and challenges that living in such a rich community can entail.

These materials have been produced by members of Royal Greenwich SACRE, in partnership with schools. Grateful thanks go to SACRE members, teachers from the primary and secondary network groups and particularly to Plumstead Manor School for sharing work they have been engaged with on making provision for prayer in the school day. In developing the materials, Royal Greenwich SACRE aim to provide helpful information and advice to guide schools in supporting their staff, pupils and parents so that they can better understand and cater for each other's needs and perspectives.

The development of this suite of information and examples of practice has been prioritised to support schools as they continue to support their workforce and nurture their pupils as they grow to become active citizens of Royal Greenwich for the future.

It includes advice for areas of the curriculum and school life where, in some instances, there has been confusion and difficulty in establishing lines of communication between schools and families. It indicates aspects of school that may be confusing or worrying for parents and attempts to clarify why that may be so, whilst attempting to suggest ways of addressing these areas to the benefit of all parties.

The guidance is designed so that it can be dipped into as required and may be updated or developed over time.

This guidance was developed by a working group of the Royal Borough of Greenwich SACRE. Teachers from the Royal Borough of Greenwich schools were consulted on and contributed to the contents of the guidance.

## **Whole School Provision**

For religious believers there can at times appear to be a conflict between their work as an employee or their child's education and full compliance with the needs of the faith community and individuals for religious observance.

It is essential that schools are aware of the needs of their students and of adult members of the school community in regard to religious observance, and in particular any period when this might lead significant numbers to be absent from school. It is also essential for teachers to know of occasions when students are likely to be fasting or engaged in exceptional religious activity out of school hours so that internal tests, educational visits and heavy homework and coursework demands can be avoided.

In working on this document we have had due regard to the Equality Act 2010 and the subsequent duty this placed on schools.

## **The Equality Duty 2010**

The Equality Act 2010 provided a single, consolidated, simplified source of discrimination law. For schools, for the most part, the effect of this law is the same as it has been in the past –schools cannot unlawfully discriminate against pupils because of their sex, race, disability, religion or belief or sexual orientation.

Compliance with the equality duty is a legal requirement for schools, but meeting it also makes good educational sense as the equality duty supports good education and improves pupil outcomes. It helps a school to identify priorities such as underperformance, poor progression, and bullying. It then helps it to focus on what can be done to tackle these issues and to improve outcomes by developing measurable equality objectives.

The Equality Duty extends to all the aspects of a person's identity – known as 'protected characteristics' – that are protected under the Equality Act 2010. These are race, disability, sex, age, religion or belief, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity and gender reassignment.

The general equality duty sets out the equality matters that schools need to consider when making decisions that affect pupils or staff with different protected characteristics. This duty has three elements. In carrying out their functions all public bodies are required to have 'due regard' when making decisions and developing policies, to the need to:

1. Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010.
2. Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.
3. Foster good relations across all protected characteristics, between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

Schools therefore need to:

1. Remove or minimise disadvantages
2. Take steps to meet different needs
3. Encourage participation when it is disproportionately low.

In producing these materials we have also had consideration of the Duties on schools to promote community cohesion and to promote Fundamental British Values as part of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

## Promoting Fundamental British Values

In November 2014 the duty was placed on all schools to actively promote the fundamental British values of *democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.*

Since the Education Act 2002 maintained schools have been required, as part of a broad and balanced curriculum, to promote the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school and of society.

The 2014 guidance related specifically to the requirements to actively promote fundamental British values in schools and explained how this can be met through the existing requirement above. Through ensuring pupils' SMSC development, it said, schools can also demonstrate they are actively promoting fundamental British values.

The Government also linked this with the Equality Act: *'Every effort should be made to ensure the school's ethos promotes the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance for those with different faiths and beliefs; and encourage students to respect other people, with particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010.'*

Ofsted are required to consider the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. This remains an opportunity, where appropriate, for schools to demonstrate and inspectors to consider how wider links with the community contribute to pupils' development in these areas.

Ofsted are also required to consider how well a school meets the needs of the range of pupils at the school. Inspectors will therefore be considering whether the school is meeting the needs of, for example, girls and boys, pupils from different ethnic communities, those eligible for free school meals and the pupil premium, those who are disabled or have special educational needs, and looked after children.

## Providing Prayer / Reflection Space in Schools

Religious practice involves believers in duties such as saying prayers (sometimes at prescribed times), keeping fasts, attendance at communal or family gatherings for worship or celebration and on occasion abstaining from work or everyday activities. The current pattern of the school year takes account of most of the needs for the communal or personal religious observances of western Christians as schools are closed on Sundays, and major western Christian festivals fall within current school holiday periods. However for faiths other than Christianity, or for Eastern Christians (Orthodox, Copts etc.) important occasions often fall during the school term.

There is no legal requirement to provide a space for prayer and reflection for pupils or staff but in the interests of generating and maintaining excellent relationships within a school community there may be a very strong case for providing one, especially if this has been requested. Acknowledging pupils' needs by providing a space for prayer and reflection may contribute to fostering good relations between the school and its community groups, which is relevant to meeting its public sector duty of the Equality Act 2010. It can also help pupils to develop awareness of and respect for diversity in relation to religion.

Good practice examples give us insight into ways to approach supporting the needs of pupils and staff who wish to observe religious duties during the school day. One local school is engaging in a pilot to have two rooms of reflection. They say:

*'The purpose of a room of reflection is to create a space in which members of the community can go to quietly pray and/or reflect. It will be a safe, quiet space open at lunch times, and supervised by adults, that is for the use of everyone. Creating such a space fits with the school's values and vision in that it promotes a respect for the different cultures and backgrounds that make up our school community.'*

For more details, please refer to Appendix: Plumstead Manor School – Room Of Reflection

## School Uniform

The governing body of each school decides on the uniform policy or dress code, and it is the headteacher's responsibility to make sure pupils keep to the rules. While students are expected to adhere to the school's uniform policy, schools must be considerate to the needs of different cultures, races and religions.

Governors are also required to have regard to their responsibilities under the Race Relations Amendment Act 2000 which required them to assess the impact of all policies, including uniform or dress codes, upon all pupils. The DfES guidance on school uniform at the time required schools to be sensitive and considerate towards the culture, race and religion of all their pupils and:

*'expects schools to accommodate these needs within a general uniform policy, for example, allowing Muslim girls to wear appropriate dress and Sikh boys to wear traditional head dress. The DfES does not consider it appropriate that any pupil should be disciplined for non-compliance with a school uniform policy, which results from them having to adhere to a particular cultural, race or religious dress code.'*

Current advice on uniform can be found at:

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/514978/School\\_Uniform\\_Guidance.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/514978/School_Uniform_Guidance.pdf)

Managers in schools will be aware that believers have very significant religious and cultural concerns requirements relating to dress. Many religious and cultural traditions require restrictions on particular styles of dress, for example:

- wearing the hair in a certain way, e.g. having locks, not cutting the hair
- wearing head coverings e.g. hijabs, turbans and yarmulke or kippah
- wearing long or modest clothing which covers the body
- wearing of particular jewellery like the Sikh Kara, or bracelet.

In most cases these should not be in conflict with official dress codes, uniforms, or health and safety, but sensitivity and flexibility should be shown and efforts made to accommodate the wearing of religious dress safely.

If it is practical and safe to do so, staff and pupils may welcome the opportunity to wear clothing consistent with their religion. Where organisations adopt a specific dress code or uniform, careful consideration should be given to the proposed code to ensure it does not conflict with the dress requirements of some religions. General dress codes which have the effect of conflicting with religious requirements may constitute indirect discrimination unless they can be justified for example, on the grounds of health and safety.

Some religions or religious denominations require that women and sometimes men should dress modestly and organisations should consider whether this requirement is contravened by their dress code. For example, women may wish to wear a shirt or blouse outside their skirt in order to avoid accentuating their body shape. Many Muslims, concerned for personal modesty and out of respect for Allah, have a strict dress code, for example expecting that for everyone's clothing should be modest and not tight-fitting, transparent or accentuate the body shape. In practice this means a wide variety of styles can be worn. Boys should always be covered between the navel and knee and girls reveal only their hands and faces.

Provided that Muslim girls who wish to are permitted to wear long, loose versions of a school skirt, loose fitting trousers, long sleeves and a headscarf to cover their hair, they can comply with school uniform as regards colour, fabric etc. without problem. The school has a right to expect that Muslim parents provide their children with clothing in a material suitable to the climate of the UK and to see that any headscarf or hijab worn by their daughters can be safely tied for work in the science lab, domestic science or CDT workshops.

With these considerations in mind, school uniform rules will need to take particular account of these concerns for example by supporting Muslim women and girls who wish to cover themselves appropriately for example by wearing long skirts and headscarves or Jewish men and boys who wish to wear a kippah.

## Symbols and jewellery

Some religions require religious symbols to be worn, whilst members of other religions may wish to do so as a choice to symbolise the importance of their faith in their lives.

Sikhs are traditionally required to wear 'the 5 Ks' These include a stainless steel bangle, (kara), a small ceremonial dagger (kirpan) and uncut hair (kesh) which is secured in a topknot and covered with a patka or a turban to keep it clean and tidy. The kirpan is often small and symbolic. Not all Sikhs observe these requirements in the UK but many of those with cut hair still wish to wear their kara to symbolise their heritage and the meaning this has for their beliefs and values.

Wearing religious symbols on chains may need sensitive discussion with families as some Christian pupils may wear fish, crosses or crucifixes on chains, some Hindu children may wear the Aum symbol on a chain and some Sikh pupils may wear a small symbolic kirpan on a chain. Some pupils from Chinese backgrounds may wear protective charms, for example a piece of jade, and although not religious artefacts these should not be treated as decorative jewellery. In certain cultures non-religious symbols may be worn. Where safety is an issue, pupils need not always be asked to remove the items, but rather asked to tape them to the skin so as to avoid accidents.

There are items of jewellery, which are culturally specific to some religions, for instance Hindu men wear neck beads (Kanthi Mala) which are an indication of their faith. Additionally, some religions are designated by body markings such as a red spot on the forehead (Bindi Sindur) and schools should consider allowing for these within their policies. Some Muslim children may wear Qur'anic verses either wrapped or sewn in cloth or contained in small metal boxes or locket worn on a chain or string around the neck or upper arm, or pinned inside clothes. These are religious artefacts and not jewellery. Some adornments, for example nose studs worn by girls of Asian background, are not jewellery in the strictest sense of the term, but wearing them is often steeped in cultural tradition and requests to remove them need to be handled sensitively and with consideration.

If schools have a policy on the wearing of jewellery, having tattoos or other markings, it helps to have conversations with their communities in order to work together to ensure their guidelines are both flexible and reasonable concerning items of jewellery and markings which are traditional within some religions or beliefs. Unjustifiable policies and rules may constitute indirect discrimination.

## School Food Provision

Food in schools has a major part to play in children's education, health and wellbeing. Schools have a vital role in teaching children about the importance of good food culture and in helping them to develop the life skills necessary to live a healthy and fulfilled life.

School food provision can also contribute to children's understanding of some of the cultural aspects of faith. In order to promote a positive food culture in school, head teachers and school staff need to be well-informed about nutrition, diet and cooking. Senior leaders and school catering staff should also ensure that school food menus offer an appropriate provision for any dietary requirements related to children's faith. Schools are bound by the Equality Act (2010) and should ensure that children are not directly or indirectly discriminated against in terms of food provision or opportunities to learn about food, including curriculum-based opportunities. Schools are bound by statutory school food standards and the governing body is responsible for ensuring that the national food standards are met. There are some exceptions to the standards, however.

Please refer to 'School Food In England' (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/standards-for-school-food-in-england>) for more details.

# Delivering the Curriculum

Equalities legislation has been put in place relating to race, gender, age, disability, religion or belief and sexual orientation. Education can have a significant role in promoting religious equality by demonstrating recognition and mutual respect based on developing understanding and valuing diversity.

Educational practitioners need to consider how to eliminate discrimination on the basis of religion or belief (or absence of religion or belief), advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations, by addressing prejudice and promoting understanding.

It is important that schools are aware of cultural and religious sensitivities related to delivering the Curriculum.

Whilst members of some faiths may have concerns regarding delivery of elements of the curriculum and may wish to withdraw their children from these subjects / topics, in fact the only subjects from which they may withdraw their children are religious education, collective worship and sex education.

In order to reassure parents and encourage inclusion, there are sometimes ways in which schools can support concerned parents by being aware of their concerns, opening dialogue with them and using resources sensitively.

Schools should draw on knowledge that exists within the school community, involving parents, carers and governors. By being as aware as possible of cultural and religious sensitivities, schools should hopefully minimise situations arising where parents make a request to withdraw their child from subjects.

## Art

Some Muslim communities are opposed to art work which involves drawing human beings or creatures in a realistic mode because of strict religious injunctions against depictions of humans or animals which might result in idol-worship.

Islamic art developed a unique character, utilizing a number of primary forms: geometric, arabesque, floral, and calligraphic, which are often interwoven. These may be useful a starting points for linking curriculum requirements to Islamic conventions as Muslim pupils may be more comfortable with reproducing items from the natural world and examples from Muslim practice around the world can be useful stimuli for such work. The following websites may be useful:

[http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/islam/art/art\\_1.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/islam/art/art_1.shtml)

<http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/t/teachers-resource-voyage-through-the-islamic-middle-east/>

<http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/c/calligraphy-in-islamic-art/>

<https://www.tes.com/teaching-resource/islamic-art-6038821>

[http://www.metmuseum.org/-/media/Files/Learn/For%20Educators/Publications%20for%20Educators/Islamic\\_Art\\_and\\_Geometric\\_Design.pdf](http://www.metmuseum.org/-/media/Files/Learn/For%20Educators/Publications%20for%20Educators/Islamic_Art_and_Geometric_Design.pdf)

## Music

Members of some Christian groups consider music to be indulgent and sensual unless forming part of their worship experiences.

The legality of music and singing in the Shari'ah (Islamic Law) is a topic which is hotly debated amongst individuals and Muslim scholars of the present day. Much has been written both pro and con regarding the legality of music and singing, clouding the issue, and creating confusion.



The sources of Islam, the Qur'an and Sunnah, as well as the rulings of the Sahaba (Companions of the Prophet (saws)), and Imams Abu Hanifa, Malik, Shafi'i, and Ibn Hanbal are unanimous in their verdicts, that music and singing, with certain limited exceptions, is haraam (forbidden). Other Muslims do not agree with this and there are many Muslim religious and secular forms of music available in the world today. What this clearly demonstrates is that schools in Greenwich could contain a range of pupils whose families are somewhere on the continuum between being comfortable with music or being vehemently opposed to it.

As pupils may not be withdrawn from music by their parents, schools need to accommodate this range of beliefs with great care, particularly being sensitive to pupils' concerns or distress in being required to sing songs (or Christmas carols or hymns) which contain words opposed to their religious beliefs or values.

## **Science**

Many observant members of a range of world religions express concern about how evolution and creationist views of the origins of the world are taught in science lessons. Schools need therefore to ensure that teachers do not imply that religious perspectives are narrow or primitive when introducing this subject.

Islam has a great history of scientific and medical research and it is helpful to promote these where possible.

<http://www.islamicity.com/science/>

<http://www.1001inventions.com/media/documentaries/science>

## **Physical Education**

### **Clothing**

Some religious beliefs require the wearing of certain forms of clothing. For physical activities clothing needs to be appropriate for the activity, enabling pupils to operate safely whilst also helping pupils to conform with religious conventions and ensuring that modesty and dignity are respected. Schools should have agreed examples of a range of acceptable and unacceptable clothing, explaining the reasons for school policy and practice. Head coverings where work should be tight, secured in a safe manner and unlikely to obscure vision.

All jewellery should be removed. Where difficulties arise in relation to the removal of religious symbols contact should be made with parents/carers to ensure they are aware of the potential dangers associated with the wearing of such items.

### **Swimming**

The ability to swim extends beyond simply recreational or competitive activity. It enables pupils to develop a life-saving skill that all pupils have an entitlement to develop. Adjustments to swimming attire can be made to accommodate religious and cultural sensitivities.

### **Changing facilities**

Attention needs to be paid to options related to changing facilities and showering as schools need to provide adequate and acceptable levels of privacy.

## **PSHE and Sex & Relationships Education (SRE)**

Members of some faith communities may fear that Sex and Relationships Education (SRE) in schools may conflict with the values and teachings of their faith. There can be a mistrust or misunderstanding by parents/carers about what SRE is (including its content and purpose). Addressing these misunderstandings and building trust between the school and home can often ensure that SRE is supported by parents and carers. Schools need to be clear on the following facts and best practice in SRE, so that they can be confident in relating this information to parents and carers.

### **Understanding What Is Meant By SRE**

SRE is *'lifelong learning about physical, moral and emotional development. It is about the importance of marriage for family life, stable and loving relationships, respect love and care. It is also about the teaching of sex, sexuality and sexual health.'*  
*'Statutory SRE Guidance for Schools' (DfEE 0116/2000)*

It is *'learning about the emotional, social and physical aspects of growing up, relationships, sex, human sexuality and sexual health.....A comprehensive programme of SRE provides accurate information about the body, reproduction, sex, and sexual health. It also gives children and young people essential skills for building positive, enjoyable, respectful and non-exploitative relationships and staying safe both on and offline.'*

*'SRE for the 21st Century' (Supplementary advice to the Statutory SRE Guidance DfEE 0116/2000)*

Under the National curriculum, children and young people have an entitlement to SRE that is relevant and supports them in learning about different faiths and cultures. It must include factual information about legal and health aspects of sex, sexuality and sexual health. Some pupils and parents/carers may feel that this conflicts with religious belief. However, effective teaching can respect religious opinion and guidance whilst also providing a legal and health context. For example, a religion may forbid the use of contraception but schools must also teach them about the legal and health aspects of contraceptive use, so that they are informed and able to take responsibility for their future choices.

### **Climate and Moral Framework for SRE**

SRE must be taught within a clearly developed and reinforced learning climate. Best practice would be to develop this climate through establishing ground rules with the pupils. If it is explained to pupils that they are going to be discussing their thoughts, feelings, families and identity then they will come up with appropriate ground rules to ensure that they learn, are safe and respected. This would include a rule about respecting each other's opinions and establishing that they might disagree on some issues.

Learning content must be matched to the age and emotional development of the class. Children aged 3-6 will ask questions about body parts and differences between boys and girls. As they get older, children will begin to ask more complex questions about why people choose to have boyfriends/girlfriends/get married. Secondary aged children will ask more in-depth questions about topics such as the rights and wrongs of behaviour in relationships, choices they may have to make about identity, sexuality, sexual health and their moral responsibilities to themselves and others.

For pupils to learn effectively in SRE and be able to discuss these topics of interest to them, then good quality SRE must start in the Early Years (friendships, hygiene, likes/dislikes etc.) and build up year on year, with involvement from both home and school. If this happens then children are more likely to stay safe and be prepared for growing up. Research has shown that young people often wish they had had better SRE earlier and that effective SRE is more likely to delay the onset of sexual activity.

SRE is a values-driven subject and this can mean that it is both compatible with faith beliefs and able to challenge them. It is a subject with aims that are shared by parents and carers: for children and young people to grow up to be healthy, happy, safe and confident citizens who can make good decisions and be able to negotiate a modern, multi-cultural and multi-faith society. SRE in schools should be clearly set within the moral and values framework of the school. This values framework should also guide teachers so that they follow agreed school values and do not allow their own opinions to influence their teaching.

## The SRE Curriculum (Statutory and Non-Statutory)

SRE has 3 main components:

- Attitudes and values (e.g. individual conscience; moral considerations and dilemmas; the importance of family, marriage and stable, loving relationships; respect for difference and diversity, including faith beliefs).
- Personal and social skills (e.g. managing emotions; managing relationships confidently and sensitively; understanding the consequences of behaviour and choices; learning how to recognise and avoid exploitation and abuse).
- Knowledge and understanding (e.g. physical development at different stages; understanding human sexuality and reproduction; learning about contraception and sexual health support services; understanding choice in sexual relationships, in order to delay the onset of sexual activity, avoid unplanned pregnancy; understand healthy relationship behaviours, in order to avoid abusive situations and enjoy a fulfilled life).

Some aspects of SRE are statutory and must be taught at an appropriate age. These are the aspects of SRE which fall under the statutory Science curriculum i.e. most of the knowledge and understanding from the third bullet point above. The rest of the SRE curriculum should be taught as part of a planned curriculum for Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education (PSHE). This covers the first two bullet points above.

To summarise, the most effective SRE happens when both the statutory and non-statutory elements are taught and when some form of SRE teaching happens in every year group.

Schools must have an up-to-date SRE policy, agreed by Governors. It is helpful to share the aims of the policy, the climate-setting procedures and curriculum content with parents/carers so that they are able to see that SRE is valuable to their children and not in direct conflict with any moral framework of their faith.

### Parental Right to Withdraw the Children from SRE

Parents have the right to withdraw their children from all aspects of SRE **except** those covered by the statutory National Curriculum (see above). This is often misunderstood, as it is very often the statutory aspects of SRE (the biology) that parents are at unease with. Helping them to understand the aims, objectives and context for SRE is helpful but a school must be clear on the aspects of SRE which they have a duty to teach.

When schools and parents/carers have a good dialogue about the aims of SRE, the statutory and non-statutory curriculum, and the climate-setting/ground rules used and the knowledge that school wants them to be involved in their child's SRE learning then it is usual for parents to agree that SRE is important for their children. Nationally, only 0.04% of parents/carers choose to withdraw their children from SRE.

Schools should inform parents/carers that they have the right to withdraw but it is most effective to do this alongside a dialogue that sets out the above.

If parents/carers exercise their right to withdraw their children from SRE then the school must make alternative arrangements for the pupil concerned and best practice would be to have had some dialogue with the parents/carers (to address their concerns and possible misunderstanding, in the first place) and to ask for reassurance on how they are supporting their child to learn and understand the non-statutory SRE from which they are being withdrawn.

### Best Practice in Encouraging Parental Partnership

Informing parents and carers of all of the information above can help to re-assure them that the SRE in school will not conflict with the values of their faith.

Other points that bring about best practice in encouraging parental partnership are:

- Having an understanding of what some faiths believe on a range of 'sensitive' topics in SRE is important for improving the dialogue between a school and its community. Some useful information on what different faiths believe about topics such as puberty, marriage, contraception and sexuality is covered in the book *'Faith, Values and Sex and Relationships Education'* by Simon Blake and Zarine Katrak (ISBN 1900990 32 6). However, it is important for schools to remember that, within any faith community, there may be different interpretations of religious text and that some of these interpretations may represent cultural beliefs as much as religious beliefs.
- Sharing the aims of SRE with parents/carers. Ask whether these agree with their home values and what they would want for their child.

- Asking parents/carers to think about what SRE children need in today's society (to reach those aims) and how they learn about sex and relationships, if not through responsible education from home and school.
- Inform parents of what SRE content there is in every year group (including the Early Years and Foundation Stage), how it will be taught and how they can support their child's learning. Reinforce that SRE takes place within a safe learning environment.
- Ensuring that parents/carers understand that SRE is lifelong learning and is about developing skills and values, as well as knowledge.
- As parents/carers for their ideas, not their 'concerns'. This sets a negative context for SRE and suggests that there might be something to worry about!
- Do not just show parents/carers a DVD that the pupils will watch. This should not be the sole learning activity in any effective SRE programme and so should not be seen to be so from a parent/carer perspective.
- Build up any relationship with local faith or community leaders that might be helpful. This may need to start with addressing concerns and misconceptions too but might create a valuable source of support in the long run.
- Avoid holding parent/carer consultation meetings where a potential 'them and us' situation might be set up between the school and the families. Instead, hold meetings where you ask them to engage and discuss the aims/purpose and context of SRE *with each other*. This allows for the discussion of faith perspectives as part of the wider context for SRE and is more likely to ensure that parents/carers come to support the school, even if there are aspects on which they agree to disagree. The purpose of any meetings must be to develop the school community's trust that the pupils best interests are at heart and they will be educated within the appropriate professional standards.

### **Useful Resources for Developing Effective SRE**

Some of these resources are of general use in developing effective SRE but they also contain sections on working with parents/carers and understanding the relationship between SRE and faith:

Sex and Relationship Education Guidance (DfEE 0116/2000)

Sex and Relationships Education (SRE) for the 21st Century (Supplementary advice to the Sex and Relationship Education Guidance DfEE (0116/2000)

Faith, Values and Sex and Relationships Education by Simon Blake and Zarine Katrak (ISBN 1900990 32 6)

Faith, Values and Sex and Relationships Education (Sex Education Forum Factsheet)

<http://www.sexeducationforum.org.uk/>

<http://www.sexeducationforum.org.uk/practice/faith,-values-sre.aspx>

<https://www.pshe-association.org.uk/search.aspx?q=SRE>

## Guidance on Collective Worship

Every Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) has a legal responsibility to advise its Local Authority (LA) on issues regarding collective worship.

There are often concerns expressed by parents and teachers about the nature of collective worship. Some are concerned that collective worship promotes Christian values and beliefs and that other faiths and beliefs will not be recognised and celebrated. Others are worried that their child will be expected to 'pretend' to have a faith that is not their own or to say words or perform actions that are contrary to their religious beliefs.

The Royal Greenwich SACRE has produced this guidance in order to support community schools as they seek to improve their delivery of collective worship.

SACRE intends this to be a simple, useful document, which gives helpful advice and which particularly, supports schools when they wish to mark festivals celebrated by members of the schools and the local community.

### Why must we have Collective Worship?

It has been a legal requirement to provide collective worship in schools since 1944. The 1988 Education Reform Act (ERA) affirmed its statutory position, with some of the earlier prescription to do with grouping and timing relaxed, allowing what had become widespread practice in schools. The 1996 Education Act further confirmed the requirements, since when there has been no change to this primary legislation, by which duty schools remain bound.

The basic requirement is that all registered pupils shall take part in an act of collective worship every day. (ERA 6.1) There are only two exceptions to this: parents have the right to withdraw their child from collective worship and pupils in school sixth forms are permitted to decide for themselves whether to attend or not.

Schools have a legal duty as set out in the 1988 Education Reform Act (ERA) to:

- a. promote the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school and of society;
- b. and prepare such pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life.

Collective Worship can make an important contribution towards discharging this duty.

### What is Collective Worship?

The law has never provided a precise definition of collective worship but above all else it must be an educational experience. We know that it is not the same as faith community worship (corporate worship) because:

- A community school is not a faith community
- A community school contains pupils and staff from many different faith backgrounds as well as those who have no religious beliefs or no faith background; and
- A school community contains a wide range of people with different views on what 'worship' might mean and what or whom may be worthy of worship.
- Collective worship is not the same as an Assembly because staff and pupils do not have the right to withdraw from Assembly. Assembly is usually the time when members of the school come together to pass on information and move forward matters of secular school business (notices).

## **The Law on Collective Worship**

Although the law has not given an all-embracing definition of collective worship it does have something to say on the matter.

The Government issued Guidance in 1994 in the form of Circular 1/94 from the then Department of Education, which dealt with both Religious Education and Collective Worship.

The unequivocal 'advice' contained in Circular 1/94 was controversial from the start, and in 2010 the sections of the Circular dealing with Religious Education were revised. However the sections dealing with collective worship remain the official Government guidance.

The delivery of collective worship is guided by the law and government guidance which states that:

- collective worship must be provided daily (separate arrangements may be made for nurseries and special schools)
- collective worship may take place at any time of the school day
- schools may decide on the age/grouping of pupils and these may vary from day to day
- the time decided for the delivery of collective worship may vary for different groups from day to day
- generally collective worship should take place on school premises (clearly this is not possible when pupils are away on school journeys for example when the venue for the collective worship will be changed)
- The content of the majority of acts of collective worship in a term should be "wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character, reflecting the broad traditions of the Christian belief."
- The content should have regard for the family backgrounds, ages and aptitudes of pupils
- Parents may withdraw their children from collective worship
- Teachers may withdraw from collective worship
- In a community school the responsibility for managing the provision for collective worship is with the head teacher after consultation with the governing body and
- Every maintained school is required to provide information about the collective worship provided by the school and how parents may withdraw their children from it.

### **What does 'wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character' mean?**

All relevant legislation consistently avoids describing school worship as Christian and this fact has been taken to mean that Collective Worship is not expected to be Christian worship in any conventional sense. The lack of a precise legal definition of collective worship allows freedom of interpretation.

- it can be 'wholly or mainly...'; therefore collective worship does not have to be all 'of a broadly Christian character. Indeed, the Act specifies that 'every act of collective worship required by section 6 ... need not comply' with this description;
- collective worship must 'reflect the broad traditions of Christian belief; that is to say, it is broad rather than specific or exclusive, reflecting plurality and focusing, not on doctrine or traditions of worship, but on belief

that is broadly but not exclusively Christian.

- the law does not say 'of a broadly Christian content or style'.
- It does not mean creating pretence of Christian worship.
- It does not need to contain any elements of Christian ritual or liturgy
- It can mean incorporating elements that Christians might recognize from their worship, e.g. songs, music, stories, learning from the good example of others, readings from holy books.
- It does mean promoting values that Christians believe to be important. These may be, and often are, values held to be important by other faiths as well.

### **Positive Purposes of Collective Worship**

SACRE members believe that collective worship can be provided in accordance with the law to the benefit of the whole school community. It can add value to the education process, for example by providing an opportunity to:

- encourage pupils to develop awareness of the universal moral principles of right and wrong, justice and fairness and concern for the fate of others and the world;
- affirm and celebrate the values and ethos of the school;
- add to the pupils' development of an awareness of, and a sense of belonging to, the many different dimensions of the schools' community;
- gather for a special purpose;
- share an experience which promotes thought and reflection;
- consider their own beliefs and values, both religious and secular
- promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development;
- consider and reflect upon a variety of situations and issues and make a personal response and
- reflect quietly and make an internal response in the light of personal beliefs and background: this may include worship of God within each participant's own faith understanding.

To ensure that a quality experience is provided, we believe that collective worship has to be well planned and effectively led, resourced and managed. The integrity of all those present should be recognised and safeguarded throughout all collective worship experiences.

### **What is the relationship between Collective Worship and religious education?**

- Collective worship is a means whereby the school community comes together in order to celebrate and reflect upon those values that it considers important to promote; it is not assembly;
- Whilst collective worship should be a quality experience and pupils should learn from it, an act of collective worship is not a lesson;

- religious education is a subject of the curriculum and as such cannot be taught through collective worship;
- religious education could not be delivered in a broad, balanced and differentiated way to all pupils through collective worship;
- it would not be possible to allocate sufficient time to religious education in order to teach it appropriately through collective worship;
- Collective worship provides opportunities to reflect on how beliefs, that pupils learn about through planned educational experiences in religious education, have influenced people's life choices or actions.

## **Festivals and Celebrations in school and their link to collective worship**

Belonging to a community involves sharing good and bad times experienced by members of that community. This includes in schools marking the celebration of festivals important to the school and local community. This often takes place in the school's collective worship programme as collective worship is a community experience.

It is important to be aware of the cultures and faiths represented within the school and to help pupils to develop an awareness of, and respect for, holy days and times of reflection from faiths and beliefs different from their own.

In schools it is important for pupils to feel free to share the place of religious experience in their lives. In order that this can happen effectively it is necessary to foster an environment where pupils can appreciate that everyone is of equal importance, where diversity is celebrated and where pupils can develop an understanding that the needs of everyone should be treated fairly and equally. Within such a learning environment, cultural and religious diversity is regarded as positive and pupils can feel that they are able to express their viewpoints and beliefs in safety.

Schools are multicultural and multi faith communities where a number of religious and secular festivals will be of importance to different members of the community during the year. Whilst it is important to mark these times, it is also important to appreciate that the level of involvement of non-believers in any festival must not compromise the beliefs of that individual, e.g. by acting a part in a drama that they find conflicts with their own religious beliefs.

Festivals celebrated by members of the school community or the class will provide many opportunities to help pupils to begin to develop connections between faiths, festivals, key figures, places, stories and symbols. As they talk about the story associated with each festival and the way in which the festival is celebrated, pupils connect festivals to their faith context and begin to understand each other better. For example it is important that pupils learn that Christmas is a Christian festival celebrated by Christians and begin to appreciate what the festival means to those children in the community who will be celebrating it.

Here are some principles which should be considered when selecting festivals to include in the school's calendar:

- Plan festival focuses at the appropriate time of year to help pupils to make sense of their experiences.
- Help pupils to be clear about the faith to which each festival belongs.
- Introduce the story attached to the festival at an appropriate level for the pupils.
- Enable pupils to appreciate that a festival is a celebration whilst ensuring that you do not give them or their carers the impression that they are being asked to participate at the level of a member of a faith community.
- If you intend inviting pupils to share foods related to festivals take the opportunity to talk about those food restrictions and laws which relate to the faith concerned and ensure that you are aware of the food laws adhered to by members of the group so that you do not offend or confuse. For example, eating apples dipped into honey to mark Jewish New Year, is not worship and pupils can gain greater appreciation of the symbolism of wishing for a sweet new year ahead.



- The ways in which people celebrate the festival should be clearly referenced to the faith and cultural tradition - e.g. examining Diwali cards should be an opportunity to discuss Indian or Hindu art and symbol.
- Be alert to the need to avoid racial, cultural and gender stereotyping.
- Where possible involve members of the relevant community so that pupils realise the festival is really celebrated by real people. For example members of the school community can visit your collective worship to tell the pupils how they prepare and celebrate in their home.

Practitioners and faith community representatives should be careful that they are clear about the level at which they should approach these areas with young pupils. They should appreciate that their involvement is not an opportunity to convert or engage pupils in activities more appropriate to members of their faith community. It is also important to not use language that implies that everyone celebrates the festival in the same way or that implies that the school is a 'faith school'.

### **Some ideas for ways to mark religious festivals**

- Members of faith communities spend time preparing for festivals. You could have a large festival calendar in school and leading up to a festival, attention could be paid to how members of the relevant community and preparing both practically and spiritually.
- Taking inspiration from Christian Advent calendars, you could, if local communities feel it is appropriate, produce calendars relevant to some of the festivals you intend to mark, For example you could produce an Eid Calendar, a Diwali calendar, a Guru Nanak's Birthday Calendar or a Hannukah calendar. Include within them images, facts and quotations appropriate to the faith concerned.
- Within faith and belief communities, festivals are celebrated in different ways according to family or cultural traditions. You could ask a member of the school or wider community to come into school to share their particular way of marking a festival, taking time to explore what is held in common with others, particularly the inner meaning of the festival, and what is different or personal to their family.

### **Music and Collective Worship**

Make links with the school's music programme by selecting music for collective worship that comes from the relevant faith or cultural background.

Music is integral to Christian, Hindu, Sikh and Jewish worship and in collective worship pupils can be introduced to recordings of some of these in appropriate contexts. However members of some Christian groups consider music to be indulgent and sensual unless forming part of their worship experiences.

The legality of music and singing in the Shariah (Islamic Law) is a topic hotly debated amongst individuals and Muslim scholars of the present day. Much has been written both for and against the religious legality of music and singing, clouding the issue, and creating confusion.

The sources of Islam, the Qur'an and Sunnah, as well as the rulings of the Sahaba (Companions of the Prophet (saws)), and Imams Abu Hanifa, Malik, Shafi'i, and Ibn Hanbal are unanimous in their verdicts, that music and singing, with certain limited exceptions, is haraam (forbidden). Some Muslims do not agree with this and there are many Muslim religious and secular forms of music available in the world today. What this clearly demonstrates is that schools in Royal Greenwich could contain a range of pupils whose families are somewhere on the continuum between being comfortable with music or being vehemently opposed to it.

As pupils may not be withdrawn from the music element of the curriculum, schools need to accommodate this range of beliefs with great care, particularly being sensitive to pupils' concerns or distress in being required to sing songs which contain words opposed to their religious beliefs or values. There is however no requirement for them to be withdrawn from being the space where others are singing. They may be withdrawn from this element of collective worship and parents do have the right to do this.

## **Collective Worship and Special Schools**

The law is often misunderstood to mean that special schools do not have to provide collective worship. In fact the possible disapplication of special school pupils from collective worship was included referring to a narrow interpretation of their needs and was aimed at reducing the difficulty for gathering together large numbers of non-ambulant pupils.

In terms of equality of opportunity for pupils in special schools, unless there are reasons relating to space or equipment that cannot be overcome, then special schools should follow the law in the same way as mainstream schools.

## **What happens if you feel that you cannot provide Collective Worship in accordance with the law?**

If a school feels that the provision of collective worship within the broadest interpretation of the law is still not suitable for their particular context then the Head teacher needs to investigate whether it might be appropriate to ask the SACRE to grant a "Determination" in accordance with the law. (See Circular 1/94).

If this is the case then please contact the SACRE clerk for a copy of the Determinations paperwork.

## **Sample letter to visitors invited to take part in Collective Worship**

Dear.....

Thank you for agreeing to come to our school on \_\_\_ to talk to \_\_\_ class /years in assembly/collective worship about \_\_\_

Assembly/collective worship begins at \_\_\_\_\_ and generally lasts for \_\_\_\_\_ minutes. It will take place in (location) and approximately... (number of) children will be present from years.... (aged....)

Please arrive by (time) and report to the school's Visitor Reception, where you will be required to sign our visitors' book. For the duration of your stay at our school you will be required to wear a visitor's badge; this ensures that everyone understands that you are in the building on school business.

Our school community is not a faith community and collective worship is provided for all pupils. Therefore your input should be planned to be comfortable, inclusive and sensitive to the needs of all. As part of your presentation you may wish to share your beliefs with the children. This is perfectly acceptable as long as these are put into context. For example you might say 'as I am... I believe.... But please remember it is not the place of a school to provide opportunities to convert or indoctrinate pupils. The pupils and their families need to be reassured that all of their faith or culture backgrounds are of equal status and validity.

In our school we do not expect or invite children to pray as though they were all members of the same faith. As part of collective worship our pupils are used to having a quiet thinking/reflection time when they can consider the meaning of what they have heard and seen to their own lives. We hope that those who are religious believers use this time to relate the focus or theme to their personal religious beliefs and some may indeed pray or worship internally.

## Learning Outside the Classroom

“There is only one thing more painful than learning from experience and that is not learning from experience.”

Archibald McLeish,

*Learning Outside the Classroom Manifesto.*

Every young person should experience the world beyond the classroom as an essential part of learning and personal development, whatever their age, ability or circumstances. To make this a reality, a national ‘Learning Outside the Classroom Manifesto’ was launched by the Department for Education and Skills (2006).

<http://www.lotc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/G1.-LOtC-Manifesto.pdf>

The Manifesto was a shared statement of intent for all who see the benefits to young people and want to help bring about this vision of high quality, meaningful learning experiences for all.

These, often the most memorable learning experiences, help us to make sense of the world around us by making links between feelings and learning. They stay with us into adulthood and affect our behaviour, lifestyle and work. They influence our values and the decisions we make. They allow us to transfer learning experienced outside to the classroom and vice versa.

As an essential part of learning, every learner needs frequent, continuous and progressive learning outside the classroom experiences. Changes to the curriculum are giving schools greater flexibility to tailor learning to their learners’ needs. The school curriculum is now seen as the entire planned learning experience. It includes classroom lessons, but also the events, routines, visits and activities that take place out of the classroom and beyond the school. It is therefore important that proper consideration is given by all people responsible for the school’s provision to how this is inclusive for all their pupils.

The aim must be to offer all young people a wide range of experiences outside the classroom. Providing these experiences for the majority of young people is achievable, but the real challenge is providing them for all, including all religions. Not so doing could breach discrimination law.

The principles of inclusion should be promoted and addressed in school policy and practice, ensuring: -

- ✓ An entitlement to participate;
- ✓ Accessibility through adaptation or modification;
- ✓ Integration through participation with peers.

A school’s Learning Outside the Curriculum (LOtC) policy should include inclusion through:-

- ✓ an agreed vision, objectives and action plan, which reflect a commitment that all young people will experience learning outside the classroom, taking into account their circumstances;
- ✓ description of strategies for establishing and delivering LOtC experiences as frequent, inclusive and meeting the needs of learners, progressive, and embedded within the curriculum, including RE;
- ✓ developing partnerships with providers of LOtC which can build on collaboratively meeting the religious needs of pupils;
- ✓ reference to and show coherence with other school policies that refer to the school’s inclusion of different faiths;
- ✓ procedures approval, consent from / notification to / information for parents and carers, risk management.

The policy should state the aims of LOTC: -

- ↑ To develop LOTC as an entitlement for all pupils;
- ↑ To ensure high-quality provision through LOTC experiences;
- ↑ To deliver a wide range of progressive and frequent LOTC activities for all pupils;
- ↑ To design the curriculum so that it includes progressive experiences for all young people.

The school's commitment to inclusion within LOtC should then be communicated in the school prospectus and website to make and show the school's commitment to LOTC for all, explaining that it is an integral part of teaching and learning for all pupils. The message to staff, parents and pupils should be that LOTC is central to the school's mission to help all young people develop and reach their full potential and there should be an explanation of how the school will consider inclusion issues to enable all pupils to participate in these activities.

In planning an annual calendar of out of school visits, it would be sensible to bear in mind requirements of students in relation to following dietary laws, fasting, attendance at the mosque or synagogue for some festivals or for Jews returning home for the start of Shabbat so that one-off special opportunities are not denied to staff or students of particular faiths.

The Council for Learning Outside the Classroom has developed quality assurance schemes for LOtC: -

- The Learning Outside the Classroom Mark.  
This is the national accreditation for schools which recognises, and supports the development of LOtC across all subject areas. The LOtC Mark Criteria includes:

“The organisation has a stated commitment to providing and developing learning outside the classroom experiences for all pupils”

and unpacks this to include “inclusive, frequent, continuous and progressive LOtC for all pupils”

and “LOtC policies are fully inclusive with the aim that no pupil is excluded from any LOtC activity.”

- The Learning Outside the Classroom Badge.  
The purpose of the LOTC Badge is to help schools identify good quality provision by organisations providing learning outside the classroom experiences. If an organisation is displaying the LOtC Quality Badge, schools can be assured that their venue has met required standards. This must include offering services to schools to support the delivery of the curriculum including: -

- ✓ “full information given on the learning objectives of the activities on offer and the flexibility to tailor activities according to your needs;

- ✓ a culture of listening to schools' feedback and working to meet their requirements.”

LOtC providers must show that they meet a set of quality indicators which include: -

- ✓ “the provider provides activities or experiences which meet learner needs;

- ✓ the provider meets the needs of users.”

Pre-experience indicators include that the provider takes into account any equality, diversity and inclusion issues and needs.

- The Learning Outside the Classroom Site Provider Award.  
This is for organisations that welcome educational visits to their site, but don't provide any educational services. This award indicates good quality LOtC facilitation and recognises those institutions which ensure that their sites and any other services provided meet the needs of schools. The criteria includes: -

- ✓ “The provider meets the needs of users. Therefore: . . . takes into account any equality, diversity and inclusion issues and legislation;”

- ✓ “The provider ensures that the site can be used for LOtC to meet learner needs. Therefore: . . . takes into account any equality, diversity and inclusion issues when developing interpretive or educational materials.”

Inclusion of religious needs would therefore be a requirement of any school considering applying for The LOtC Mark to recognise the provision that they make for their pupils. Schools should also look for the appropriate quality mark when selecting providers and venues for LOtC to be assured that these partners recognise and address inclusion,

including religious requirements. If a provider or venue does not have such a mark, the school should at least ask the questions to ensure that any religious needs of their community can be met.

## **Learning Outside the Classroom in Religious Education.**

Visits have always been an excellent resource for Religious Education provided they are managed in a sensitive and thoughtful way. They help pupils to relate the beliefs and values about which they are learning to real people in the wider community and provide opportunities for pupils to learn by personal experiences that involve the sense of touch, smell, taste, hearing and sight: -

- by meeting and talking to people from a faith community;
- by encountering sacred space and appreciating its meaning to members of the wider community;
- by acquiring the sensitivity to behave with appropriate respect;
- by observing artwork created as a response to faith;
- by giving pupils the opportunity to see the importance of community expressions and experiences of faith at first hand.

Furthermore visits provide an important link between schools and local faith communities.

Greenwich is fortunate in having a wealth and variety of places to visit available in the locality. It is also easy to organise excursions to places of worship further afield or galleries in London. Nevertheless, visits can raise issues for teachers, parents and faith leaders. Some of the pitfalls can be avoided by careful and thorough preparation and organisation.

The Agreed Syllabus includes many requirements where visits to places of worship are recommended or are essential. However, teachers will appreciate that visits to places of worship are only one aspect of RE. They may be an interesting and helpful approach, but must be seen in the wider context of classroom activities rather than as a self-contained exercise. The purpose and value of suggested visits are clearly explained within each unit and ensure continuity and progression. There are opportunities to focus on different aspects, e.g. to look at internal and external features of a building, to explore symbols or to hear about the life and work of a community.

### **Parental anxieties**

Families can be concerned about how their children will be involved with the faith community that is being visited, particularly if members of the community might be involved in personal or community worship during the visit. Both the educational purpose of the visit and the appropriate level of involvement within the place of worship need to be clarified and agreed by all before the visit.

Parents need to be reassured that the visit is purely educational and that their children will not be asked to participate in anything that might be construed as worship. Faith community hosts need be clear about what the school's expectations are and how the visit fits into the programme of study. It is important for hosts to appreciate that the party will include a mixture of practising members of faith communities as well as non-believers.

### **Sensitivities**

In all places of worship, teachers need to be aware that their party may meet members of the community, some of whom may be experiencing times of great sadness or engaged in private worship. Pupils need to be prepared to behave sensitively on these occasions.

Some Places of Worship welcome photographs whilst others find this intrusive, so it is important to ask beforehand. In some places of worship food may be offered to pupils. Discussions with the faith community before the visit should ensure that this is done in a way that does not offend anyone and does not compromise anyone's beliefs.

## Dress Conventions:

Many religions teach that heads should be covered in a place of worship as it is God's house. Non-believers observe this as a sign of respect for the faith. Head coverings should not include slogans or advertisements. Where shoes are to be removed, please make sure socks or tights are clean and in good condition. Modest dress means clothes that are not too short or tight, do not reveal arms, legs or chests and enable pupils to sit on the floor in comfort.

Religion	Modest dress	Heads covered	Shoes removed	No leather	Males and females separated	Wash hands
Christianity	√	sometimes				
Buddhism	√		√			
Hinduism	√		√	√	sometimes	√
Islam	√	√	√		√	√
Judaism	√	√			sometimes	
Sikhism	√	√	√	√	Seated separately	√

## Learning Outside the Classroom on Residential School Journeys.

Residential school journeys are unique times that all students should experience as part of their childhood and education.

To enable all students to be able to participate fully in the residential educational visit experience, it is vital that schools ensure that their LOTC programmes including the residential school journey components accommodate the different religious needs of the faith communities that are part of their school community.

If planned properly and inclusively, the residential experience for young people is a powerful and positive learning experience in building up: -

- ✓ Relationships;
- ✓ Resilience, self-confidence and well-being;
- ✓ Impact on achievement;
- ✓ Impact on knowledge, skills and understanding;

- ✓ Impact on cohesion;
- ✓ Impact on transition.

These areas of learning are what all pupils need access to and so it must be a priority that no pupils are denied such experiences through not having any particular religious needs considered.

If schools are aware of the religious communities represented within their community, it may be possible to ensure, whenever possible, that events in the school diary, including residential school journeys, do not clash with days of significant religious importance to students or staff in the school.

When planning residential school journeys, every effort must be made to support the needs of students and staff when organising accommodation in hotels, centres or with families; this would include ensuring that the food on the residential visit should provide a healthy and balanced menu with options to meet specific dietary needs, including those required by a particular faith. It would also include that it is possible for those who would wish to, for example, attend religious services or that Jewish participants can share Shabbat with Jewish families or can attend a synagogue for services.

Some parents/carers may be reluctant to allow their children to take part in out-of-school visits unless they are reassured about details regarding safety and dietary arrangements. In addition, parents/carers may not wish their children to take part in social activities where girls mix freely with boys.

It is important that plans are discussed with the pupils and families of those concerned so that they can have their minds put at rest that their religion is being respected and the needs of their faith are being protected and their children able to participate fully alongside the other pupils whilst still following their faith.

A high quality residential experience should demonstrate that the residential experience is co-designed between the school and the provider with specific learning outcomes identified and requirements for all discussed. Residential experiences should be inclusive and offer options for everyone.

The Equality Act 2010 states that the responsible body of a school must not discriminate against a pupil because of protected characteristics, which include religion or belief, in the way that it provides a benefit, facility or service. There is a duty to make reasonable adjustments.

Activities should be available and accessible to all, taking into account protected characteristics. When a residential visit is being planned, all reasonable practicable measures must and should be taken to include all young people. Every effort should be made to find a venue and activities that are both suitable and accessible and that enable the whole group to participate fully and be actively involved.

Care should be taken not to cause indirect discrimination, e.g. arranging a residential visit during a religious festival or holiday might prevent pupils of certain religions being able to attend.

In making decisions, an educational establishment needs to balance the need to provide the best possible educational outcomes for all pupils with the need to meet the particular needs of individuals.

Overcoming specific cultural, religious or ethnic barriers:

*Some young people experience barriers to full participation in out of classroom activities arising from their cultural, ethnic or religious backgrounds. The experience of working with different communities shows that these can usually be overcome.*

*The needs of young people from different communities may be easier to overlook where there are only one or two young people from a minority group in the school. Depending on the particular cultural, ethnic or religious group to which young people belong, the following considerations should be addressed:*

*For some young people a daily schedule of prayer is important.*

*There may be dietary restrictions. Some young people may be fasting (e.g. during Ramadan) which will affect what they may eat and may also reduce energy levels. It is probably best to avoid residential activities at these times if possible.*

*Young people may not have appropriate clothing at home, and may need to be helped with this. The wearing of helmets, for example for cycling, climbing or caving, may have a potential to conflict with religious dress.*

*There may be additional concerns around sleeping arrangements; with extra assurances required that boys' and girls' accommodation will be strictly separate.*

*Information for parents may need to be provided in a language other than English.*

*Liaison with parents and the community is the key to resolving these issues. It can be particularly helpful to recruit staff, paid or voluntary, from the community concerned, who can act as a bridge, build trust in the community, and encourage participation by example."*

*Council for Learning Outside the Classroom.*

An example of best practice from a residential school journey provider that supports its schools with inclusion and diversity is PGL, a provider used by many Greenwich schools.

PGL's Additional Needs Policy Statement states,

"At PGL we are continually working to enable all guests to enjoy the many benefits of our courses, tours and holidays. If a member of your group has additional requirements, we will be pleased to discuss these with you."

They recognise that additional needs may result from a number of factors including: -

- Religious requirements;
- Cultural requirements;
- Dietary requirements.

and explain how they support these additional needs: -

### **Religious Requirements:**

We will be pleased to support participants' needs to opt out of our programmes on religious grounds for example; if an activity or event is felt inappropriate; in order to pray or attend a religious ceremony; or for any other purpose confirmed by a parent or teacher.

Choosing to opt out may mean that the participant will have to occupy themselves for a session, under teacher supervision, or that they can temporarily join another group for an alternative activity or event.

The facility to attend a religious ceremony will depend on its availability in the area of the PGL centre / accommodation. Any extra travel costs incurred will be borne by the participant, parents or school. Escort arrangements will need to be arranged between the school staff or by prior agreement with the centre in the case of an individual participant aged under 18 years.

### **Cultural requirements:**

We will attempt to assist participants with cultural needs, e.g. special dress code or special domestic arrangements, where the adjustments required to standard arrangements are reasonably practicable and do not represent a health and safety risk. Please advise your PGL tour organiser of specific requirements when you confirm your booking.



Please note, individuals travelling to countries outside the UK must adhere to local law e.g. burkas are not permitted under French law.

### **Dietary requirements:**

At PGL centres, we are able to deliver catering provision for most dietary requirements as specified by culture, religion and medical concerns, but we do not cater for weight management programmes or “faddy” diets. We regularly provide meals for a wide variety of needs including Coeliac, Nut-free, Dairy Intolerance, Vegetarian and Vegan. Where possible, information relating to dietary requirements should be provided at the time of booking. Schools and other groups should use their final forms/names list to tell us this information. For complex requirements, severe allergies, Kosher and Halal we require at least two weeks’ notice before travel.

For groups travelling to accommodation not owned by PGL for example on School Tours or Ski trips, special diets will be on a request basis and subject to availability.”

In order that all LOtC occasions can be as inclusive as possible it is therefore helpful to consider the following points:

- ✓ Have you involved staff, parents and students in the planning process making sure they appreciate your concern to be inclusive and avoid offence?
- ✓ Are all relevant dietary needs catered for in planning or providing shared food?
- ✓ Are dress expectations for the event taking into consideration religious and cultural needs? Do these include restricting dress that some members of the school community would find offensive or embarrassing?
- ✓ Are entertainments and / or music culturally / religiously acceptable to all?

The benefits of what pupils experience and learn away as a school group together has a lifelong impact and makes up many special memories that the group will both individually and collectively take with them into adulthood. It is therefore an essential that every pupil is able to have these special experiences which will affect them deeply as does a faith that they may have. The 2 must therefore be taken seriously and seen alongside each other for every Greenwich pupil in every Greenwich school.

## **Practising Faith in School: Fasting**

Fasting is a part of many religious observances which usually involves a willing abstinence from some or all food, drink, or both, for a period of time. Fasting for special purposes or before or during special sacred times remains a characteristic of many major religions of the world.

### **The Purpose of Fasting for Christians**

The bible does not dictate that Christians are required to fast; however there are times when it is deemed to be beneficial, namely when you are making decisions or need God's help. This often happens during Lent, although it can be during other times of the year (but seems to differ from congregation to congregation). The importance is that it is about strengthening the reliance and dependency on God, not the actual act of fasting itself. Usually, drinking water during the day is deemed acceptable.

To support Christian children in school, who are fasting, a school could follow the same principles outlined in the Ramadan Advice 2016, below.

Fasting itself should not pose difficulties for schools. However, fasting in Christianity happen at any time throughout the year, so it is important for schools to encourage parents to communicate clearly with the school about any religious fasting that is happening at home.

In addition, some churches hold all night prayers where, usually, the adults stay awake all night praying. Whilst this doesn't directly affect the children, they may be trying to sleep in a group setting with lots of song and prayer around them.

The overriding principle, once again, is to build up awareness and communication between the parents and school.

# Fasting in Ramadan

2016 / 1437 – 2017 / 1438

*May Allah look favourably upon your fasting and answer your prayers!*



Guidance for schools when  
meeting the needs of Muslim pupils

from the Greenwich SACRE

# RAMADAN

## Meeting the needs of Muslim pupils

### Introduction

*"Oh, you who believe! Fasting was prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before you, that you may become righteous."*

Surah Al-Baqarah (The Cow) – Holy Qur'an 2:183

Fasting in the month of Ramadan, the month of revelation of the Holy Qur'an, is an obligation for all Muslims past the age of puberty. There are exemptions from these requirements for some people, such as the sick, those engaging in a long journey, menstruating women, or those who are frail in old age. Exemptions have to be made up later or compensated for, e.g. by fasting on another day or by feeding the poor. Fasting at other times is also encouraged but is non-obligatory.

Fasting is undertaken by Muslims for the sake of Allah, the Creator, the Merciful, the Loving (to mention just three of His names or attributes) and is regarded as an expiation of human failings. It cultivates virtues such as piety, love of God, brotherhood, vigilance, devotion, patience, unselfishness, moderation, thriftiness and satisfaction with what one has, discipline, social belonging, self-control, and compassion for fellow human beings who might suffer hunger and deprivation unwillingly.

Fasting in Islam is not merely denial of food and drink alone. Muslims believe they should also try to restrain their other senses, such as the eye, ears, and particularly the tongue, avoiding backbiting, scandal-mongering, obscenity, confrontation and such matters.

Fasting during Ramadan is one of the main requirements of the Islamic faith. Muslims are required to abstain from all food, drink and sexual activity (where appropriate), from dawn to nightfall through the 30 or 29 days between one new moon and the next. The daily fast begins before the time of the Fajr (dawn) prayer and finishes at the time of Maghrib (sunset) prayer.

It is very important for many Muslim families that their children should begin participating in the practice of fasting at an early age. Most children of secondary school age, as they are considered adult members of their communities, will be expected to fast. Many primary school children will be fasting as well with younger pupils fasting possibly for part of Ramadan, or only on certain days of each week.

Teachers therefore need to bear in mind that the routine of Muslim families is entirely different during Ramadan. The whole household will be awake much earlier in the morning and will stay up later at night, particularly when, as in 2016-17, Ramadan falls in the summer months with long daylight hours. Young children may well become more tired or excitable in school during this time even if they are not fasting themselves. Those students who are fasting may become very tired and thirsty during the school day.

### Good Practice Guidelines

Schools are asked to consider the following points in determining their approach to the needs of the Muslim schoolchildren and staff in their care during Ramadan.

Key aspects should be:

- inform and reassure parents /carers in advance how they will support pupils who are fasting, including any special provisions that will be made for pupils who are fasting during Ramadan.
- in primary schools, establish a register of those pupils who will be fasting, what their fast will involve (e.g. are they abstaining from drink as well as food) and on which days, based on parental permission, given either verbally or in writing. Pupils of secondary age will be expected to fast and it would not therefore be a practical or reliable course of action to attempt to establish a register with them.
- make special provision at lunchtimes for pupils who are fasting but cannot go home. They may want to rest and be quiet or they may enjoy taking part in special activities that can be arranged for them while other pupils are having their lunch. They may also wish to perform prayers at this time, or to share reading the Qur'an with other Muslim pupils or staff.
- ensure that no pupil who is fasting is required to do anything that would make her/him break the fast or become dehydrated or weak. This could include swimming, cross-country running or weight-training.
- anticipate that fasting may make some pupils weak or tired, and adapt the curriculum as appropriate. This could mean, for example, planning less energetic activities in P.E particularly as this year's Ramadan falls in the hottest time of the year with the longest days.
- where possible, use the fact that pupils are fasting to inform and enrich the curriculum experience both for themselves and others. It could provide a starting point for discussions in a number of subjects, such as religious education, history, P.E., health education, performing arts, geography, science and in collective worship.
- Be sensitive when holding evening events such as parents' evenings, prize -giving etc. so that staff and pupils have time to return home to break their fast.

### Prayer facilities:

Many Muslim staff and older Muslim pupils who are fasting may like to have the opportunity to pray at lunchtime. If schools are to meet this need they will have to:

- provide supervised and appropriate rooms that are sensitive to the needs of the participants, where possible one for girls and one for boys if these are not already made available for this purpose throughout the year;
- make available washing facilities and a vessel for washing. Those praying will need to wash their arms and feet which, because facilities are not built for this purpose, may lead to a few puddles on the floor which will need to be cleaned up afterwards;
- allow those wishing to pray to bring prayer mats, and if they wish to, slippers to wear after ablution. Sensitive storage for these items needs to be agreed with those concerned.

### Summer Examinations 2016 & 2017

Students observing the fast will have consumed their last food and drink before dawn and then during 2016 and 2017 there will be many students across the country taking public examinations during the fast period. Given the importance of hydration for maintaining concentration, it would not be surprising if exam performance was to suffer.

Clearly, if fasting exam candidates are at an unfair disadvantage when they go into their exams with no food or water, the consequences could mean not only lower grades for the individuals but also poorer performance for their school in league tables.

Education providers should seek to reduce any disadvantage by considering how best to support staff and students during periods of fasting that clash with the exam season.

*Clare Young, a senior solicitor in the education team at national business law firm DWF said about the exam period 2016:*

*'The Equality Act 2010 gives staff and students protection from discrimination on grounds of specified protected characteristics, including religious or philosophical belief. Therefore, it is unlawful to treat a teacher or pupil less favourably because of their religion or belief, or to apply any provision, criterion or practice (PCP) that disadvantages a particular group without the PCP being a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim. In this situation, PCPs could include any arrangements made for revision or sitting exams, which could arguably place Muslims observing the fast at a severe disadvantage.'*

*It is highly unlikely that exam boards will consider it practicable to rearrange exam timetables to avoid daylight hours during Ramadan. However, it is understood that talks are taking place between teaching unions, the Joint Council for Qualifications and leading Muslim groups to see if anything can be done to reduce the impact on affected students.*

*As these arrangements clearly have an impact on a particular religious group, timetabling decisions must be capable of being objectively justified bearing in mind the difficulties of fitting in exams within the wider context of the academic year, including the need to allow time for marking and moderating and ensuring the security of exam questions.'*

For other year groups, it may be that internal school exam schedules could be retimed to ensure that students do not have too many exams on the same day, or that special arrangements are made to allow some students to sit certain exams at different times. School plans for other exam arrangements, such as revision sessions and the location of rooms could be reviewed to minimise the impact on those who are fasting.

If students are normally permitted to take food and drink into the exam room with them, it would be considerate where possible to allocate a separate exam room for fasting pupils so they are not distracted by others who might have water bottles or snacks on their desks.

### **Assemblies/Collective Worship:**

It is good practice to use collective worship / assemblies to acknowledge and explain about Ramadan. It is also helpful to check that the content of all assemblies during this time is planned sensitively towards pupils who may be feeling weak or hungry.

### **After school and out of school activities:**

Where schools have a high proportion of Muslim pupils, consideration may need to be given to suspending or adapting some extra-curricular activities during Ramadan for practical reasons.

In other schools where the normal programme will be maintained, it is important to ensure that pupils do not suffer in any way through not being able to participate. An example of this would be where 100% attendance at lunchtime practices is required by members of sporting teams.

In planning an annual calendar of out of school visits, it would be sensible to bear in mind the timing of the Ramadan so that one-off special opportunities are not denied to Muslim pupils.

With younger pupils who are not fasting every day it is usually possible to arrange with their families that they do not fast on a particular day so to participate comfortably in an outing.

### **Celebrating Id in school:**

Id-ul-Fitr at the end of Ramadan is a great day of celebration for Muslim families and it is appropriate that schools should mark this time in a special way. Some schools may want to organise events, put up signs, decorate rooms and exchange Id cards.

### **Absence for Religious Observance:**

Schools need to strike a balance between authorised absence for religious observance and excessive loss of school time and may consider the following to be reasonable:

- **Pupils** *(Please bear in mind that many Muslim families mark the occasion of Id for up to three days.)*

A one day authorised absence for religious observance at Id-ul-Fitr (a 10 day holiday in some Muslim countries) and another at Id-ul-Adha (the festival at the time of the annual Hajj Pilgrimage). If parents/carers request further days, then consideration should be given to this. Each case should be considered on an individual basis, looking at patterns of absence and the impact on the overall attendance level.

Please note that the Islamic calendar is subject to the sighting of the new moon, or the news of this from recognised Islamic authorities. Therefore, there is some uncertainty in establishing the date until the last moment. It should also be understood that different Muslims in Britain might follow different days depending on their country of origin or the school of thought they follow.

The register code 'R' should be used for absence authorised when it is due to religious observance. The DfE School Attendance Guidance (Oct 2014) states 'The day must be exclusively set apart for religious observance by the

religious body to which the parents belong. Where necessary, schools should seek advice from the parents' religious body about whether it has set the day apart for religious observance.'

- **Staff**

Requests for leave from individual members of staff should be treated sympathetically by the Headteacher and governing body.

### Communicating with Parents / Carers

It is helpful when the school's policy regarding holidays for religious observance is communicated to parents/carers and included in the school prospectus. Ideally, in advance of Ramadan, all parents/carers of Muslim pupils should receive information about the school's arrangements; either through a letter in English or translation, or a meeting in school. This communication with the home can achieve the following:

- acknowledge the importance of Ramadan and Id ul Fitr in Islam and show concern for the welfare and education of the child;
- state clearly the position with regard to authorised absence for religious observance and stress the need for parents/carers to ensure that their children are not absent for more days than are authorised;
- outline the special provisions that will be made for pupils who are fasting during Ramadan;
- request confirmation from parents/carers of primary age pupils about whether their child will be fasting during Ramadan, and if so, on which days. Or give parents/carers an opportunity to come into school to discuss how best to decide on which days to allocate fasting and which to avoid;
- give details of any plans for the celebration of Id in schools;
- seek advance notice of when the pupil is likely to be away from school (see section above 'Absence for religious observance') whilst recognising that Muslims cannot be specific in advance of the information being given by the appropriate Islamic authorities.

### Prayer Times for Ramadan

The Islamic calendar is lunar and has 354 or 355 days. Therefore precise dates cannot be forecast as they depend on the sighting of the moon. Ramadan begins on June 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> in 2016. Prayer times for June and July may be found on many mosque websites.

Id-ul-Fitr (the festival marking the end of Ramadan) falls on July 7<sup>th</sup> (plus or minus 1 day).



## **Managing World Issues That May Affect People's Understanding of Faith**

Sadly we live in a world where there is violence and discord between people of different faiths and cultures. Crisis events linked to this cause distress and anger internationally. In the UK, people who are members of the world family of any faith involved in the conflicts will be distressed and struggle to make sense of their views and the experiences of people with whom they feel a connection. Sometimes international events result in increasing levels of racism against, for example, Muslim and Jewish communities worldwide and especially in the UK.

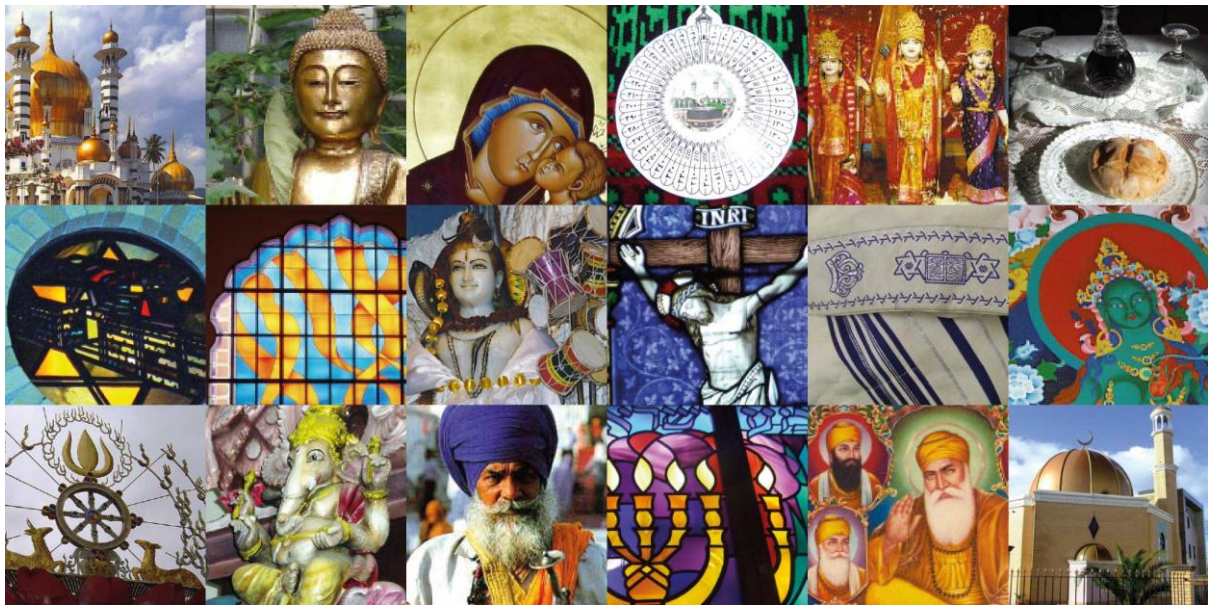
School life is strongly influenced by such outside factors and challenges the work of teachers, who wish to rise to the challenge of educating individuals who can contribute to a more peaceful future.

The following advice documents have been written to support teachers as they help pupils make sense of national and international issues that could cause distrust, anger and division. Schools are also encouraged to refer to the materials on the RE Council of England and Wales sub-site Resilience (<http://resilience-england.recouncil.org.uk>). As well as the specific Resilience suite of materials, schools can access other advice via that site. (<http://resilience-england.recouncil.org.uk/reviews/articles-pdfs-and-reports>).

## Greenwich SACRE Advice for Schools

### The Potential of RE and Collective Worship in Responding to Local, National and International Crises





## Introduction

Violent and/or tragic national and international situations and subsequent reactive comments and events which occur as political and social reactions are shocking and disturbing. Following recent such events, SACRE has considered, reflected and formulated this support and advice for schools.

Living, growing up, being educated and working in a local authority and diocese that are proud to include a rich blend of faiths and cultures, unexpected and horrible events such as terrorist attacks, international wars and crises, the damage caused by chemical weapons or the possibility of international military actions, make people question attitudes and relationships and look again at the way our communities work together. Such situations could challenge the trust we have in each other and be an attempt to destroy relationships between people of faiths and of no faith.

It is vital that people of all age groups, cultures and beliefs can talk through their fears and questions openly so that we can continue to work together to retain the cohesion of our community and protect what we hold dear.

Young people ask many difficult questions at home and in school. Teachers always endeavour to provide a safe space in which these questions can be articulated and engagement and fair, balanced and honest dialogue can happen. Schools and academies are uniquely positioned to be catalysts in their community to encourage links between faith communities and young people and their families in order to support conversations, question, have debate and discussion which should result in a positive understanding of each other.

## Religious Education

Religious Education lessons provide many opportunities where questions arise and discussions happen. This is always very challenging for all teachers whatever phase they are working in, and particularly when a crisis happens but is an important opportunity for ensuring that this event does not cause lasting damage to the community. This is especially delicate where faith or belief is in some way, even mistakenly, reflected in a current crisis.

SACRE members and the Diocese wish to take teachers using the local Agreed Syllabus back to the following Aims of RE where, stated amongst other Aims it says:

**Religious education in schools celebrates the diversity of religious and human experience. It encourages pupils to grow with the knowledge, skills, sensitivity and understanding to develop as confident and productive members of their local multi-faith community and the world.**

It is challenging for all members of a Multifaith community to see in the news interpretations of their own and other faiths and beliefs that they do not recognise, particularly when these may have led to actions that are illegal, shocking and inconsistent with their own understanding of the faith in question. There may be as a reaction, teachers, governors, pupils and parents/carers who question the validity of the way that RE appears to present faiths and beliefs through the syllabus. It is important at such times to remember that the syllabus has been constructed in partnership with faith and belief communities. It is also important as an initial response that we listen to and acknowledge the statements from the faith communities and trust that the core beliefs and practices presented in the syllabus are valid and expressed honestly.

Shocking incidents both abroad and on our own streets, show us clearly how vital it is that we learn to know and understand each other and are able to have informed and respectful discussions. This will help us to learn lessons from the events and appropriately consider their impact on and empathise with the communities involved. This in turn should contribute towards developing greater understanding between and of our multi-faith community and strengthen community cohesion.

Pupils will begin to make judgements about religious and moral issues influenced by their developing knowledge and understanding, but also influenced by exposure to the media and those around them. This will make its way into school and may manifest in argument, disagreement and possibly fearful behaviour or intimidation. Schools need to be vigilant to instances of bullying or aggression as well as distress. Pupils at different ages and abilities may or may not have a broad enough vocabulary or repertoire to debate and try to organise their thinking. This may then take place in any school lesson but particularly in RE lessons.

Schools (of all types), as major institutions within their community, have a key role to play in supporting their pupils and the families of their pupils, along with other members of the school community, and part of that support will come through accurate, complete and honest RE which allows pupils to engage in asking difficult questions, considering challenging contexts but also learning an accurate and balanced understanding of faiths.

Honest dialogue and sharing of human values along with true understanding of the richness of the diversity of our multi-faith community needs to be a core purpose and legacy of the RE in our schools. This will help goodness to come out of evil, hope to grow out of despair and develop in our young people a fair, accurate and balanced understanding of the essence of belief and of what is at the very heart of what it means to be human.

*SACRE regrets that:*

- Some elements of the media frequently use unfortunate phraseology that encourages negative stereotyping of members of faith and belief communities
- the term 'war' appears in the media at times encouraging the perception that the world is engaging in a war between religions. This is not the case.
- Racist, 'faithist' and religious stereotyping and strong negative messages in the media including those from groups marching or demonstrating result in attacks on individuals, families, businesses, personal property, faith venues and faith communities across the country, sometimes targeting members of many different religious communities and cultural groups.

**SACRE advises that schools:**

- **do not** adjust their RE curriculum to exclude teaching about any faith during times of crisis as this may give or reinforce a negative message about this faith and its adherents.

- guard against religious stereotyping, ensuring that they do not allow their pupils to automatically assume that people committing terrorist attacks in any part of the world are typical of any faith or belief.
- are extremely cautious in their use of words like 'just war', 'holy war' or 'crusade' because of many bad historical examples and their total inappropriateness if in any sense they convey that current situations represent a conflict between religions. Please note that the Second World War would be seen by many as a just war but this in no sense implies that it was a religious war.

## Supporting the Needs of Pupils

### ***Dealing With Pupils' Anxieties***

Everyone is affected in some way or another by tragic local, national or international events and in many cases people feel and express great fear both for the present and the future.

Pupils who read the newspapers or watch the news may be afraid for their personal safety in case they or people they know are going to be subjected to attacks similar to those seen in the media.

Some residents may be refugees from religious intolerance. Many of these are refugees from different parts of the world where they have witnessed inhuman acts first hand. Pupils from these families may become very concerned for their own safety and that of their parents throughout the school day.

Many believers including members of local school communities, may find themselves placed in the position of considering that fellow believers are being accused of an atrocity without proof being made public. Older pupils particularly may wish to express their anger and confusion at what they consider an injustice to members of their religion.

SACRE members know that there have been at times examples nationally of pupils and their families being subjected to verbal and physical attacks on their way to and from schools and whilst being around in their local communities. There have also been demonstrations and marches and attacks on community centres and establishments that have been intimidating and have targeted particular communities.

SACRE members also appreciate that because there are people living in the borough who have links to intolerant groups such as the British National Party, this is a time of great anxiety for members of minority faith communities or residents from minority ethnic groups who fear that they and their families may encounter physical violence.

SACRE believes that pupils will need to express and deal with their fears and confusion. Included below is the document: 'Talking with Children when the talking gets tough', distributed by Judith Myers-Walls, Purdue University, United States in the hope that this will support schools as they work with pupils who are afraid. These notes were produced following the shootings in Columbine High School in America and drafted to assist anyone working with children.

Schools and academies will also need to listen to the anxieties of parents and carers and help them to rebuild a sense of security and trust.

### ***The SACRE advises that schools and academies:***

- continue to treat religious intolerance and attacks on the basis of faith or belief in the same way as they treat racist incidents;

- need to be aware that some of their pupils may come from families involved with the National Front or the British National Party and these pupils may bring racist / faithist language and behaviour into schools;
- encourage their community to support families experiencing fear and difficulties , particularly those who are frightened for their safety.

## Collective Worship - ideas for positive approaches

- Concentrate on how ordinary people from all communities experience the same feelings and fears.
- Light candles and talk about having good memories of people after they have died.
- Use texts from holy books of world faiths that focus on respect for God, human life and other people.

## Talking with Children - When the Talking Gets Tough

Wars, shootings in schools, natural disasters, deaths at sporting events—as adults we hope that these and other tragic outcomes will never happen anywhere and definitely will not impact the children and youth we care about. We would like to protect those young minds from the pain and horror of difficult situations. We would like to ensure that they have happy, innocent, and carefree lives.

So what is a parent, teacher, or other caring adult to do when disasters fill the airwaves and the consciousness of society?

- **Don't assume that the kids don't know about it.** They probably know more than you think. The reality of today's world is that news travels far and wide. Adults and children learn about disasters and tragedies shortly after they occur, and live video footage with close-ups and interviews are part of the report. Children and youth are exposed to the events as soon as they can watch TV or interact with others who are consumers of the news. Not talking about it does not protect children. In fact, you may communicate that the subject is taboo and that you are unavailable if you remain silent.
- **Be available and “askable.”** Let kids know that it is okay to talk about the unpleasant events. Listen to what they think and feel. By listening, you can find out if they have misunderstandings, and you can learn more about the support that they need. You do not need to explain more than they are ready to hear, but be willing to answer their questions.
- **Share your feelings.** Tell young people if you feel afraid, angry, or frustrated. It can help them to know that others also are upset by the events. They might feel that only children are struggling. If you tell them about your feelings, you also can tell them about how you deal with the feelings. Be careful not to overwhelm them or expect them to find answers for you.
- **Help children use creative outlets like art and music to express their feelings.** Children may not be comfortable or skilled with words, especially in relation to difficult situations. Using art, puppets, music, or books might help children open up about their reactions. They may want to draw pictures and then destroy them, or they could want to display them or send them to someone else. Be flexible and listen.

- **Reassure young people and help them feel safe.** When tragic events occur, children may be afraid that the same will happen to them. Some young children may even think that it already did happen to them. It is important to let them know that they are not at risk—if they are not. Try to be realistic as you reassure them, however. You can try to support them and protect them, but you cannot keep all bad things from happening to children. You can always tell them that you love them, though. You can say that, no matter what happens, your love will be with them. That is realistic, and often that is all the children need to feel better.
- **Support children’s concern for people they do not know.** Children often are afraid not only for themselves, but also for people they do not even know. They learn that many people are getting hurt or are experiencing pain in some way. They worry about those people and their wellbeing. In some cases they might feel less secure or cared for themselves if they see that others are hurting. It is heart-warming and satisfying to observe this level of caring in children. Explore ways to help others and ease the pain.
- **Look for feelings beyond fear.** After reassuring kids, don’t stop there. Studies have shown that children also may feel sad or angry. Let them express that full range of emotions. Support the development of caring and empathy. Be careful not to encourage the kind of response given by one child: “I don’t care if there’s a war, as long as it doesn’t affect me and my family.”
- **Help children and youth find a course of action.** One important way to reduce stress is to take action. This is true for both adults and children. The action may be very simple or more complex. Children may want to write a letter to someone about their feelings, get involved in an organization committed to preventing events like the one they are dealing with, or send money to help victims or interventionists. Let the young people help to identify the action choices. They may have wonderful ideas.
- **Take action and get involved in something.** It is not enough to let children take action by themselves. Children who know that their parents, teachers, or other significant caregivers are working to make a difference feel hope. They feel safer and more positive about the future. So do something. It will make you feel more hopeful, too. And hope is one of the most valuable gifts we can give children and ourselves.

*Distributed by Judith A. Myers-Walls, Extension Specialist, Purdue University, United States*

*Developed in the days following the shootings at Columbine High School and distributed via list serves, web pages and hand-outs at training programs, and re-distributed on 11 September 2001.*

## **Faith and other Texts that may be useful for collective worship**

### **Christian**

Some Christian responses might include the following but some are more appropriate for secondary than primary:

Christians believe that there is a place for righteous anger. God does not condone or bless any act of evil. Romans 12:19 'Do not take revenge my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written "It is mine to avenge, I will repay," says the Lord'.



Rather than blaming God for all that goes wrong, Christians emphasise that God wants people to share their feelings with him and this includes our sadness, anger and questioning.

Psalm 139 begins- *O Lord you have searched me and you know me.*

*You know when I sit and when I rise;*

*You perceive my thoughts from afar.*

*You discern my going out and my lying down;*

*You are familiar with my ways.....*

and ends with *Search me O God and know my heart;*

*Test me and know my anxious thoughts.*

*See if there is any offensive way in me,*

*And lead me in the way everlasting.*

### **Anxiety**

Christians believe that everyone is made in the image of God and that whether they are Christian or not God knows everyone by name:

Matthew 6: 25 - 34 *'Do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear... God knows you and loves you'*

(Luke 12: 6-7) *'Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten by God. Indeed the very hairs of your head are numbered. Don't be afraid, you are worth more than five sparrows.'*

Use thoughts of love and reconciliation from the faiths:

*Be open to the night...*

*Pray with open hand, not with clenched fist...*

(Lord Dunsay, from The Lion Prayer Collection, by Mary Batchelor pub. Lion ISBN 0 745 93133 2)

*Lord; make me an instrument of your peace.*

*Where there is hatred, let me sow love,*

*Where there is injury, pardon,*

*Where there is doubt, faith,*



*Where there is despair, hope,*

*Where there is darkness, light,*

*Where there is sadness, joy.*

(Attributed to St Francis of Assisi)

### **Faith Hope Love Prayer.**

God of faith, deepen our faith

so we may bear witness to Christ in the world;

God of hope, strengthen our hope

so we may be signposts to your transforming presence;

God of love, kindle our love

so that, in a fragile and divided world,

we may be signs of the faith, hope, love

which we share in Jesus Christ. Amen.

*Bishop Christopher, The Bishop of Southwark.*

### Muslim

#### Surah al-Baqara (Qur'an 2, v. 284 -285)

(284) *"To Allah belongs all that is in the heavens and the earth. Whether you show what is in your minds or conceal it, Allah calls you to account for it. He forgives whom He pleases, and punishes who He pleases. For Allah has power over all things.*

(285) *The Messenger believes in what has been revealed to him from his Lord, as do the men of faith. Each one of them believes in Allah, His angels, His books, and His Messengers. They say: "We make no distinction between one another of His Messengers." And they say: "We hear and we obey: we seek Thy forgiveness Our Lord, and to Thee is the end of all journeys."*

#### Surah al-Hujurat (Qur'an 49, v.13)

(13) *Oh mankind! We created you from a single pair of a male and a female, and made you into Nations and tribes, that you might know one another (and not that you may despise each other). Verily, the most honoured of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the most righteous of you. And Allah has full knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things).*

An unknown Muslim scholar reflects on interfaith:

*'I should become one with you*

*And you would become one with me.*

*I should be the body,  
You would be the soul.  
Then no one would be able to say  
That I am different from you,  
Or that you are different from me!*

## Other Resources and Websites.

Use the text of 'Peacetimes' by Scholes, published by Belitha Press [ ISBN 1 85561 761 7], to explore issues around Peace and to provide a focus for reflection - teachers will be able to modify their use of this text for almost any age group.

**The 3 Faiths Forum.** <http://www.3ff.org.uk/>

3FF builds understanding and lasting relationships between people of all faiths and beliefs.

They run education, engagement and action programmes that bring diverse communities together.

They say: Why is this work needed?

'In our diverse societies good relations between our communities are essential. Without these ties, myths and prejudices flourish, often leading to racism and intolerance. Our programmes break down barriers and find ways for people to work together to improve their communities and society. By building new intercommunal relationships we make positive social change possible.'

**Insted Consultancy,** <http://www.insted.co.uk/index.html>

“reflecting work on equality and diversity in education.”

This website contains a wealth of useful background information and ideas.

**REsilience.** <http://resilience-england.recouncil.org.uk/>

**REsilience is a self-evaluation, planning and training opportunity for teachers of RE. The programme is school based and can be tailored to individual needs. Its purpose is to help increase teachers' confidence when addressing contentious issues, particularly where religious ideas are sometimes used to try to justify extremism and violence.**

**National Union of Teachers** <http://www.teachers.org.uk/node/18572>

## **Teaching About the Syrian Refugee Crisis, Within the Context of Religious Education (RE) and the Requirement On Schools to Promote Fundamental British Values.**

The Syrian Refugee Crisis is a global concern and good practice in schools may include teaching about the issue. It is a topic that has a moral context and this is reflected in the significant media coverage. Schools should always plan very carefully for a topic which may bring about strong emotions and opinions. The following advice offers suggestions for ways that schools can teach this topic within the context of Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development (SMSC). Teaching about this or any other refugee crisis as part of a school's planned RE or SMSC provision supports the requirement on schools to promote 'fundamental British Values' and also supports a school's duty under the PREVENT duty.

### **Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development:**

Through their provision of SMSC, schools should:

- enable students to develop their self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence;
- enable students to distinguish right from wrong and to respect the civil and criminal law of England;
- encourage students to accept responsibility for their behaviour, show initiative, and to understand how they can contribute positively to the lives of those living and working in the locality of the school and to society more widely;
- enable students to acquire a broad general knowledge of and respect for public institutions and services in England;
- further tolerance and harmony between different cultural traditions by enabling students to acquire an appreciation of and respect for their own and other cultures;
- encourage respect for other people;
- encourage respect for democracy and support for participation in the democratic processes, including respect for the basis on which the law is made and applied in England.'

'Promoting Fundamental British Values as Part of SMSC in Schools: Departmental Advice for Maintained Schools' (DfE, 2014)

### **Fundamental British Values:**

'Promoting Fundamental British Values as Part of SMSC in Schools: Departmental Advice for Maintained Schools' (DfE, 2014) states that:

'Schools should promote the fundamental British values of **democracy**, the **rule of law**, **individual liberty**, and **mutual respect** and **tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs**.

Actively promoting the values means challenging opinions or behaviours in school that are contrary to fundamental British values. Attempts to promote systems that undermine fundamental British values would be completely at odds with schools' duty to provide SMSC.

The Teachers' Standards expect teachers to uphold public trust in the profession and maintain high standards of ethics and behaviour, within and outside school. This includes not undermining fundamental British Values.'

### **The Prevent Duty:**

'The Prevent Duty: Departmental Advice for Schools and Childcare Providers' (DfE, 2015) requires that schools build children and young people's resilience to radicalisation. Through teaching about the Syrian refugee crisis, schools can support this theme by:

- ‘providing a safe environment to debate controversial issues’;
- ‘helping pupils to develop critical thinking skills’;
- ‘encouraging pupils to develop positive character traits through PSHE, such as resilience, determination, self-esteem and confidence’.

### **Teaching About the Refugee Crisis:**

Teaching about the current refugee crisis would make a positive contribution to all of the areas above. To prepare for teaching this topic, schools should consider using the REsilience materials on the RE Council's website:

<http://resilience-england.recouncil.org.uk/resources>

The aims of the REsilience Programme are to

- increase confidence in addressing contentious issues, particularly those sometimes linked with violent extremism
- provide continuous professional development opportunities for all teachers of RE
- encourage reflective practice.

In addition, REsilience Gateway documents have been produced to support teachers, although these are not to be used as classroom activities or materials:

<http://www.re-silience.org.uk/index.php/en/materials>

The 3FF (formerly the Three Faiths Forum) have also produced some advice on tackling contentious issues:

<http://www.3ff.org.uk/resources>

The National Union of Teachers has also provided useful advice:

<http://www.teachers.org.uk/search/node/Conflict%20in%20the%20middle%20east%20issues%20for%20schools>

All of these materials will provide sound advice that schools can consider before deciding how best to approach the refugee crisis in lessons.

It would be valuable to consider, in depth, the ethical and practical dilemmas facing those searching for safe havens from war and those being asked to provide homes and safety.

Schools could also focus on how humanity can learn from global issues such as mass migration.

The current Syrian refugee crisis has been described in the media as the biggest crisis of refugees since WW2. Schools might look for the teachings of the Faiths on caring for those in need, the homeless and the weak.

Schools should be prepared for students to have strong views on the issues raised and must provide an appropriate, planned and safe climate for this to happen. Some students may have had or heard discussions in their home or may have family links to the conflicts. Students may be confused about what they are seeing and hearing in the media. Dealing with strong opinions is always challenging and opinions may be voiced that will require schools to consider whether a student is somehow being drawn into extremist views. If this is the case, schools should take the advice of their safeguarding lead or person who has responsibility to act under the Prevent Duty.

Any work on this topic could be linked to January's Holocaust Memorial Day.

The theme for Holocaust Memorial Day 2016 is 'Don't Stand By', which would provide an interesting link between terrible tragedies in the past and present.

<http://hmd.org.uk/news/don%E2%80%99t-stand-%E2%80%93-theme-holocaust-memorial-day-2016>



# Room of Reflection – A Pilot

## Guidance to Students

**June 2015**

### **Purpose**

For many students at Plumstead Manor their faith is a very important part of their identity and is a source of strength and resilience in their lives. Prayer can help students to become deep thinkers, accustomed to contemplation and 'active silence'. Prayer can also be an obligation at different times of day for members of some communities.

The purpose of a room of reflection is to create a space in which members of the community can go to quietly pray and/or reflect. It will be a safe, quiet space open at lunch times, and supervised by adults, that is for the use of everyone. Creating such a space fits with the school's values and vision in that it promotes a respect for the different cultures and backgrounds that make up our school community.

### **Location**

There will be two spaces in the school where we will create Quiet Reflection Rooms.

- The first of these is in King's Warren Building Room KM05 and will be a room for the use of female students in Years 7 to 11.
- The second of these will be in Lerner Building Room L205. This will be a room for the use of male and female students in Years 12 and 13.

## Expectations

Students making use of the Room of Reflection must abide by the normal school rules and expectations:

- Treat everyone and everything with respect, which includes the school building and environment.
- Follow staff instructions sensibly.
- Listen carefully and speak in turn.
- Use appropriate language at all times.
- Keep electronic devices on silent and in your bag.
- Move quietly and safely around the building.
- Must not miss a lesson in order to use the Room of Reflection.
- Must not disrupt the learning of others in their use of the room.
- Cannot access the Room of Reflection outside of the designated times.

There will be no tolerance of behaviour which breaks the school's normal codes of conduct and expectations of behaviour and safety. Equally, students should be free from bullying, discrimination or prejudice when using the space as they are at all other times. Anyone found to be breaking these rules will have their right to access the space removed.

## Operation and Supervision

- The Rooms of Reflection will be open at lunchtimes only.
- Students will be supervised by an adult at all times when using the space. They must sit or kneel quietly and engage in calm contemplation, reflection and prayer.
- There will be no eating in the Rooms of Reflection, and no use of electronic devices.
- The 6<sup>th</sup> Form space in Lerner Building will be open from 12.30-1.10pm.
- The space open to students in Years 7 to 11 in King's Warren Building will also open from 12.30-1.10pm.
- There will be a limit of **one student** at a time allowed to use each of the spaces.
- The spaces in different parts of the school are not intended for the use of groups or for communal prayer.
- The use of the room for quiet reflection or prayer must not disrupt the school's normal operation.



**Plumstead Manor School**