



Southampton SACRE

Advice document for Schools
and Community groups



Revised February 2017





Southampton SACRE

(Standing Advisory Committee for Religious Education)

It is a statutory duty for all Local Authorities to have a SACRE in place.

The SACRE has a statutory duty to:

- advise Southampton City Council upon matters connected with Collective Worship and Religious Education in Community Schools and in Foundation Schools which do not have a religious character. Religious Education in these schools is to be given in accordance with the Locally Agreed Syllabus.
- advise Southampton City Council on teaching methods, choice of materials and teacher training in Religious Education and Collective Worship
- produce an annual report
- require Southampton City Council to review the Locally Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education at least every five years (revised and published November 2016)

In addition, the SACRE can consider applications made by a head teacher to release some or all of the pupils in a particular school from the requirement for Collective Worship to be wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character.

The SACRE also provides monitoring visits for all Southampton Schools in a five year cycle to ensure that the advice it provides to the Local Authority relates to up to date, local information.

The SACRE meets at least three times each year and has representatives from a wide range of groups. These currently include:

Group A Christian denominations and other religions

Group B Church of England

Group C Teachers and Teaching Unions

Group D Councillors – Southampton City Council elected members

Co-opted members to include those supporting the work of the Agreed Syllabus Conference

Professional support is provided by Southampton City Council School Improvement Team.

A web page within www.youngsouthampton.org/working-with-children/schools-guidance/sacre is currently under development and will host this document, annual updates, the Locally Agreed RE Syllabus, National Guidance for RE and local projects that will support RE and Collective Worship in Schools.

Southampton SACRE advice document for Schools and Community groups (revised February 2017)

This document aims to provide advice for schools to be used alongside their own policies, and in partnership with their families and local communities. The Southampton SACRE offers this advice to share good practice to further strengthen relations across the city.

It is hoped, this advice will pro-actively continue to support schools with regards to questions and queries raised within Southampton. In the development of this first document the following groups have made contributions, either through the city wide consultation, the provision of information, advice or have provided people to be part of the working group.

- Schools – Primary and Secondary
- Sikh Community
- Hampshire County RE Advisors
- Muslim Council, Southampton
- Baha'i Community
- Jewish Community
- Hindu Community
- Southampton SACRE members
- Southampton City Council – professional support to SACRE, Ethnic Minority Service, wider Children's Services and Early Help teams
- Christian Community
- Church of England education team

Southampton SACRE recognises that schools are communities in their own right bringing people together with different views and backgrounds for the promotion of education for all. The SACRE is encouraged that schools work hard to increase respect of difference across the City with a wide range of partners. With however, individual differences in mind, all questions must be dealt with on a case by case basis holding communication with those concerned as the central factor. It is always important to be aware that people will follow their faith in a wide range of ways. Schools are also advised to consult local faith representatives and their own legal advice and HR teams for guidance. This advice does not replace the need for those avenues together with statutory guidance from DfE to be used.

Further contributions will be welcomed from Schools and Faith groups as a part of the SACRE review processes. The working group acknowledges that not all faiths are yet reflected within this advice.

We hope you will find the advice useful within your organisation. It will be reviewed annually by Southampton SACRE.

Southampton SACRE February 2017

Southampton SACRE advice for Schools and Community Groups

Dress – clothing and jewellery

Questions that have arisen or could arise	Explanation of why the request /question may be being made – religious context	Consideration for schools / those discussing issues with parents
<p>Can my child wear a hijab / turban / other head covering to school?</p>	<p>Muslim girls are required to cover their body, they often adhere to this by wearing a hijab /headscarf when they reach puberty, some like to prepare for this discipline by head covering with for, example a head scarf in addition to their usual clothing for example school uniform.</p> <p>The hijab is a part of a girls identity so girls are likely to be extremely reluctant to remove it.</p>	<p>Consider how this can be incorporated into the school uniform policy, for example requiring non-ornate, plain colour hijab/headscarf to work with uniform colour. Schools must ensure their PE kit policy also reflects the latest Health and Safety guidance, for example a light, tight fitting hijab for some activities would be safe and acceptable, also to have one to change into after PE for hygiene. Always ensure school policy is clearly communicated and discuss with parents any potential issues before they arise. Articles of clothing that are to be worn as part of the faith should be allowed unless there is an overriding health and safety or public interest reason for restrictions.</p>
<p>Can my child wear a chastity /purity ring at school?</p>	<p>This is a choice a Christian has made to show commitment to remain a virgin until marriage, it is not a requirement of Christianity to wear it.</p>	<p>Schools should follow their policy on jewellery in school and the wearing of rings for health and safety reasons. Items of jewellery such as this should not be treated any differently to other 'personal choice' jewellery. (<i>Safe practice in PE, AfPE 2012</i>). However, discussion with the pupil and parents is recommended to enable understanding. This will also recognise the choice the pupil is making whilst acknowledging and understanding the health and safety requirements the school must follow.</p>
<p>Can my child wear a Kara to school?</p>	<p>It is a bangle that is one of the 5 requirements of the Sikh faith and is to be worn at all times.</p>	<p>Health and safety needs prevail but discussions around cost of item and managing PE activities need to be held with parents. There are specific court cases in relation to the wearing of the Kara bangle that should be considered and the item should be accommodated within school uniform and jewellery policies unless there are overriding health and safety reasons for restricting its wear during certain activities.</p>
<p>Can my child wear a cross to school?</p>	<p>A cross is a symbol of Christianity, Many Christians will wish to wear the cross, often on a necklace. This symbol has personal significance for themselves to their faith at all times. This is however not a requirement of Christianity.</p>	<p>Schools should be sensitive to choices made by people with regard to their faith but should follow their health and safety policy on the wearing of jewellery in school and in lessons such as PE. Items of jewellery such as this should not be treated any differently to other 'personal choice' jewellery (<i>Safe practice in PE, AfPE 2012</i>). However, discussion with the pupil and parents is recommended to enable understanding. This will also recognise the choice the pupil is making whilst acknowledging and understanding the health and safety requirements the school must follow.</p>

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<p>Can my child have the 5K's on their person at all times in school?</p>	<p>Sikhs who have been initiated in a ceremony called Amrit Pahul are required to carry a Kirpan at all times. The Kirpan is a ceremonial sword and is one of the five sacred symbols of the Sikh faith. Both male and female children can be initiated. There is no lower age limit, but the child must be old enough to understand the significance of the ceremony. Children of primary school age have undergone the ceremony.</p>	<p>Schools should be fully aware of the religious observance of Sikhs and the need to deal with this issue sensitively. It should normally be possible to reach a compromise between the religious practice of the Sikh community on the one hand, and the understandable concerns of schools and non-Sikh parents on the other, for example by permitting the wearing of symbolic Kirpan during school times and activities. (<i>'School Security' 1997 DfEE</i>), Governing bodies of all schools and, in the case of all maintained schools, LEAs, have responsibilities under health and safety legislation to ensure the safety and welfare of those within schools. It is for Governing Bodies to decide whether to allow Sikh children to wear a Kirpan in school. They will need to be able to satisfy themselves that the Kirpan does not present a health and safety risk either to the child wearing it or to other pupils and staff.</p>
<p>What should we do at school as a "top knot" has come undone and the pupils is really worried?</p>	<p>In Sikhism, jooora refers to the top knot of kes, the essential long unshorn hair worn by Sikhs, who are forbidden, by religious mandates, to cut their hair. It is typically worn beneath the turban by devout Sikhs of any gender or age. The jooora may be twisted and secured atop the head by winding and knotting the hair, or wrapping the kes with a length of turban cloth called a keski. A small wooden kanga used to comb the kes, is tucked into the jooora.</p>	<p>Discuss with parents in advance to ascertain their wishes if an incident occurs. If and when an incident does occur, consider calling parents so they know what has happened and actions taken/to be taken to resolve. Reassure the pupil, most parents will allow someone at school to redo especially if this has been made clear in meetings and communications with parents.</p>
<p>Can my child wear a moli/tilak/rakhi to school and can they keep it on always?</p>	<p>All are part of the Hindu faith. A moli – a sacred thread worn at any time of the year – red thread boys or girls, thrad - black thread worn on wrist by boys and girls, janoi – white 3/5 strand cotton string worn over shoulder and across chest mainly by boys, a religious item. Tilak is sacred red dot on forehead boys or girls and Rakhi is a wrist thread (more likely worn August and September) symbol of love and protection between siblings, can be any colour. It is usually worn by boys, can be by girls also.</p>	<p>Be aware of the difference between what may look like a friendship bracelet and one of these items. Discuss with parents how to wear them safely in school. Health and safety may need to prevail in some activities. Ensure school policies are up to date with regard to wearing of these items (and items for other religions) and the circumstances in which the school can ask for them to be removed (even if only temporarily in certain activities).</p>

Southampton SACRE advice for Schools and Community Groups

Curriculum

Questions that have arisen or could arise	Explanation of why the request /question may be being made – religious context	Consideration for schools / those discussing issues with parents
<p>In which Key Stage should Religious Education be taught?</p>	<p>RE is a statutory curriculum subject from statutory school age to the End of Key Stage 5. As it is taught through a locally agreed syllabus (or diocesan syllabus for a faith school) the context of the RE curriculum does not appear within the National Curriculum document as it does for other subjects, eg. History</p>	<p>All schools are required to publish details about their curriculum on their website – this should include RE. RE is a statutory subject for all pupils from statutory school age to the End of Key Stage 5. The parental right to withdraw, wholly or partly, exists for RE lessons– further guidance is included later in this document. The right to withdraw should be clearly indicated to parents.</p>
<p>Can my child not receive Sex and Relationships Education (SRE) in school?</p>	<p>Lack of knowledge of what is being taught and what resources are being used can cause anxiety for faith and non-faith parents.</p> <p>SRE is sometimes taught by an Imam or parents to young muslims from age of 10. Some resources and discussions are seen as too explicit by some parents.</p>	<p>Parents have the right to withdraw from SRE*, but not from the content of the Science curriculum. Share with parents the learning outcomes, messages/ themed discussion planned and resources that will be used in plenty of time. If possible consider single sex lessons, schools could consider including visitors such as Imam or a Muslim teacher for some delivery. Consider sensitivities of teacher also. Visitors included in delivery should be briefed to the attendance of any faith pupil. (<i>DfEE circular 0116/2000</i>).</p>
<p>Does my child have to participate in Religious Education? And work that may be linked across other areas of the curriculum?</p>	<p>Lack of knowledge of what is being taught in RE lessons causes anxiety for many people.</p> <p>Worry about things that may offend such as images of prophets, and for some any human. Representations of God (Jews and Muslims), Father Christmas, Christmas trees and birthdays (Jehovah Witness).</p>	<p>There is a parental right of withdrawal* for all or parts of RE. RE is delivered through the Locally Agreed Syllabus for all maintained schools and many academies adopt it also or follow their own/academy chain syllabus. Locally is written by Southampton SACRE in conjunction with a wide range of specialists. Information about RE should be easily accessible on school websites. Parents would probably benefit from having the cycle of enquiry methodology explained to them.</p> <p>A meeting is advisable with parents who make a request to ascertain and record why they wish to withdraw, be aware that parents do not have to give reason. Check that parents understand there is no worship involved in RE lessons, but it is a taught subject which promotes difference and Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Values, British values and preventing extremism. All issues important to the development of a young person in society today.</p>
<p>Can my child only learn about religions I want them to?</p>	<p>Concern around what will be taught to their child about their own and other religions in school may be held by some parents.</p>	<p>Stories and music could be shared with parents from wider curriculum areas to check suitability. Websites should have up to date curriculum information that is accessible and informative for parents.</p>

Southampton SACRE advice for Schools and Community Groups

Curriculum

Questions that have arisen or could arise	Explanation of why the request /question may be being made – religious context	Consideration for schools / those discussing issues with parents
Dance / Drama / Music / Art participation – do all children have to participate?	Muslims are not able to dance if it represents a person or animal. Some Muslims believe these activities are not allowed at all in Islam and believe people who participate are sinful. No recreation of God or prophets in any 2D or 3D representation would be acceptable to Muslims, nor would role play of God /prophets be acceptable.	Both form parts of National Curriculum subjects – so dialogue with parents is essential well before the activity. Consider planning carefully, both the content and music to be used, e.g it should be ok for Muslim pupils to dance but not to represent people or animals, ensure clarity between celebrating and representing is clear. Take care with language used around this when teaching and be sensitive around music use especially when using pop music, some lyrics or inference will be offensive to many people. Ensure meaning of performance in NC is clear to parents as being different from public performance when it is.
Does my child have to participate in singing assembly?	Some religions do not recognise singing, many will be offended by the lyrics of some songs. Some will align singing with hymns from a religion other than their own and will therefore not wish their child to participate.	Be clear – is this part of the music curriculum, or an act of worship? Again be sensitive around what children are being asked to sing. Consider a list of songs to be used to be included in newsletters or on websites.
How will the school provide changing for PE that fits with my family beliefs?	Modesty and mixed sex changing will be of concern to many families.	Be sensitive to all children – as many sensitive around changing particularly UKS2, although concerns around modesty will occur from younger. If possible offer an alternative place to change and discuss with parents. Ask if children can change themselves –supervision and support requirements for young pupils can make this very difficult. Tracksuit trousers and long sleeved tops could be included in PE Kit requirements.
Can my child not participate in mixed swimming lessons?	Islam has clothing restrictions for girls who have reached puberty cover from neck to ankle, and cover their head. Free mixing of girls / boys is limited in Islam post puberty to mitigate boy / girl relationships outside of marriage.	Burkinis – full sleeve tops, trousers with attached hoods are available in swimming fabric, but are expensive. Separate swimming lessons for girls and boys with teachers of their own gender is often the most appropriate solution where it can be arranged. Reasonable adjustments (such as single sex teaching) must be considered where the alternative may result in discrimination on the grounds of religion or sex.

*withdraw – relates only to the activity requested not from the whole school day

Southampton SACRE advice for Schools and Community Groups

Curriculum

Questions that have arisen or could arise	Explanation of why the request /question may be being made – religious context	Consideration for schools / those discussing issues with parents
<p>Does my child have to celebrate a festival that is outside of our family religion at school?</p>	<p>Concerns about religious observance within festivals will be held by families.</p>	<p>Share information about the curriculum and the topic/event in plenty of time for discussions to be held with families. Concerns around learning about festivals/ events are usually allayed when there is understanding that no worship is involved or children can participate as an objective observer.</p>
<p>Does my child have to go on school trip to a place of worship?</p>	<p>Some parents of faith and non-faith groups are anxious when their child is offered the chance to experience a visit to a place of worship, especially if it is somewhere they are not familiar or one that may be for beliefs different to their own.</p> <p>Concern if act of worship will occur in the place of worship being visited with children.</p> <p>Muslim parents would not wish their children to learn about pigs or views of those who eat pigs during a visit to a farm for example.</p>	<p>The educational purpose of the visit should always be made clear to pupils and parents. It also should be made clear for parents if there is to be worship undertaken within the visit or not. As for Collective Worship, where this is the case, pupils can be invited to participate if they wish. Parents may appreciate receiving information about activities to be undertaken on the trip, they may wish to put themselves forward as volunteer helpers (with due regard for safeguarding). Some parents could act as advocates for the visit for example, if their child has been on the trip in the previous year. Always open a discussion about parental concerns regarding an educational visit as sometimes this can ensure concerns are considered at the planning stages for future visits.</p> <p>Ensure information is on website and a pre-visit or planning meeting may be required with parents. Encourage parents to put concerns to the school and give parents information about trips in a timely manner to aid them to do this.</p>

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Southampton SACRE advice for Schools and Community Groups

Collective Worship and Private Worship

Questions that have arisen or could arise	Explanation of why the request /question may be being made – religious context	Consideration for schools / those discussing issues with parents
<p>Can my child not attend Collective Worship (CW)?</p>	<p>Parents are not likely to allow their child to carry out an act of worship in a faith different to their own. It is not permitted in some religions, for example, Islam. Many parents accept their children can be present during worship, but they must not actively participate. These concerns would extend to include for example CW that may include a nativity scene.</p>	<p>Share school policies and have clear information available for parents around ethos, values and policies before they make a parental choice to select school. Ensure parents of pupils new to a school / newly arrived have clear information.</p> <p>Ensure information is clear on website and always meet with parent to discuss reasons for request, perhaps invite to assembly for parents to see policy in action. Consider the introductions used for prayer, is it invitational or enforcement? Pupils can be present as observers or as active participants.</p> <p>Parent can request to withdraw* a child from CW, this should be made in writing – not all assemblies are CW so be clear when worship is taking place. Does school policy say children with agreed request to withdraw* leave before worship or is there a different arrangement in place for example a different activity can often resolve the issue, alternatives should not be subjects studied at school, or more time to work on English/Maths for example. Request to withdraw* must come from the parent.</p> <p>Schools would need to discuss whole or part determination with SACRE members prior to application for determination if there was consideration to be made for a school or a group of pupils within a school to receive CW not broadly Christian.</p>
<p>My child wishes to be able to pray whilst in school – is this possible?</p>	<p>For muslims this is likely to be linked to Friday prayers which is primarily an obligation on males who have reached puberty. They are obliged to attend Friday prayer in congregation. This is more likely to be requested during winter months as days are shorter so time between prayers is much less. May be for other reasons so dialogue with parents is essential. Prayers are not only carried out on Friday.</p>	<p>Always discuss the request with parents. Some schools have incorporated prayers into their Friday lunchtime very successfully to accommodate this religious obligation. Reasonable adjustments should be considered where they can be accommodated and restrictions must meet the relevant necessity and proportionality tests if an accommodation cannot be reached.</p>
<p>A looked after child has a different faith to their carers – how do we ensure their faith needs are being met?"</p>	<p>Some looked after children may be living with carers of a different faith to their own or no faith. The social worker has a mandatory duty to check the faith of the child, ensure carers are aware of any faith background and the requirements of the faith.</p>	<p>Schools should liaise with the Social Worker and ensure that the faith is recorded within school records. Any concerns should be raised with the carer or social worker.</p>

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Southampton SACRE advice for Schools and Community Groups

Dietary needs

Questions that have arisen or could arise	Explanation of why the request /question may be being made – religious context	Consideration for schools / those discussing issues with parents
<p>How will the school cope with the dietary needs of my family faith?</p>	<p>Hindus follow a vegetarian diet, some follow a vegan diet.</p> <p>Muslims eat only Halal meat and fish, but no meat from a pig.</p> <p>It is forbidden for any Sikh to eat halal meat according to the four 'kurehats' (misdemeanours). As such no Sikh child should be served halal meat in any capacity.</p>	<p>Check what foods are on offer in school that adhere to vegetarian diet – including no beef or eggs. Does the school have Halal meat in its food offer? Is this clear for parents and pupils. Ensure the school food offer is communicated to parents clearly and discussions are held where concerns are raised.</p>
<p>Karvachauth – How will you make sure my daughter is ok in school</p>	<p>Fasting once a year for girls of Hindu faith, from sunrise no food or water. Parents might want to keep their daughters off school if they don't know how the school will respond or support this.</p>	<p>Ask parents to let school know when this is to take place, consideration must be given to the welfare of the child and temporary provision made be considered for safety reasons e.g. no high intensity exercise, or shade offered if hot.</p>
<p>How will you safeguard my child when fasting for Ramadan?</p>	<p>All Muslims who have reached puberty have an obligation to fast for Ramadan. Many children who have not reached puberty like to participate so as to get into the spirit of Ramadan. People with medical conditions e.g. diabetes, asthmatics are not obligated, Sanctity of life overrides all religious obligations in Islam. The exact start of Ramadan is signalled by moon sightings indicating the start of the ninth month in the Islamic calendar, lunar based.</p>	<p>Ensure school knows when Ramadan is and ask parents to inform school if their child is fasting.</p> <p>Staff should be aware and monitor children who are fasting, call home if concerned child safety is at risk and fast can be broken if necessary. Consider whether provision on those days needs amending for individual children.</p>

Southampton SACRE advice for Schools and Community Groups

Religious festivals / celebrations

Questions that have arisen or could arise	Explanation of why the request /question may be being made – religious context	Consideration for schools / those discussing issues with parents
<p>Diwali – can my child have time off school to celebrate?</p>	<p>Diwali is a celebration as big as Christmas for Hindus, it is a family celebration, a festival of lights with present giving, sharing of sweets/rich foods and fireworks. Most Hindus activities take place after dusk for this festival. A few may request leave for their child as they may be travelling to celebrate with family who do not live nearby. The day after Diwali is the Hindu New Year.</p>	<p>Discuss with parents the reasons for the request but normal school attendance policy, determined by Governing Body will generally apply. Policy around absence should consider requests for absence of this nature using “R” code. Many include one authorised day absence for religious festivals.</p> <p>Schools could have discussion with parents regarding the festival and what is involves. Schools may wish to gain advice from SACRE representative about the festival. Some schools organise INSET where possible so as to avoid impact upon attendance.</p>
<p>Eid – will a request for absence be authorised?</p>	<p>Eid – highly important Muslim festivals – Eid-ul-Fitr – festival of charity, Eid ul-Adha – festival of sacrifice. They are two separate days, not the same each year and are time dependant. Parents would be highly likely to request absence. Muslims will not go to work, college or school at Eid.</p>	<p>Discuss with parents the celebration and consider the needs of the child if they are fasting to prepare for the celebration when married.</p>
<p>Karvachauth – a Hindu celebration</p>	<p>A celebration usually followed by married hindu women. It has a very high observance rate in some parts of India. It involves a fast from sunrise to the moon appearing once all the celebratory activities have been completed including mendhi.</p>	<p>Discuss with parents the Holy days and consider safety when fasting. Arrange how to inform parents if a concern arises around health and safety whilst fasting just as for other faith groups. Parents may wish to request time out of school for each “Holy day”. Each year dates change, many are on weekends and within school holidays. The school could ask parents if they are able to share a calendar so schools can identify in advance any dates for example that may be the same as exams so early discussion can be held.</p>
<p>Baha’i holy days</p>	<p>There are 9 Holy days and the calendar is changing to merge dates under the Gregorian and lunar calendars, so dates are likely to be different each year. Baha’is have an annual Fast lasting nineteen days (from sunrise to sunset) starting on the 1st or 2nd of March. Normally young people from the age of fifteen will fast, though some may want to start a bit younger. There are various medical exemptions. While not Holy Days, there are 4 or 5 days in late February which are days of charity and gift giving. Young children especially might celebrate.</p>	<p>Discuss with parents the Holy days and consider safety when fasting. Arrange how to inform parents if a concern arises around health and safety whilst fasting just as for other faith groups. Parents may wish to request time out of school for each “Holy day”. Each year dates change, many are on weekends and within school holidays. The school could ask parents if they are able to share a calendar so schools can identify in advance any dates for example that may be the same as exams so early discussion can be held.</p>

Southampton SACRE advice for Schools and Community Groups

Requests for exceptional leave of absence

Questions that have arisen or could arise	Explanation of why the request /question may be being made – religious context	Consideration for schools / those discussing issues with parents
<p>Under normal circumstances no requests for leave of absence within term time are likely to be granted, unless they are exceptional or named specifically within the schools attendance policy. Exceptional leave can be applied for by following a schools procedures for this. Any clarification for parents should be sought firstly with the school, the Education Welfare Officer / Governors</p>		
<p>Can my child be absent from school to attend a religious conference?</p>	<p>Religious conferences are held for many religions throughout the year. Most Islamic conferences are conducted in the evenings or at weekends.</p>	<p>Discuss with parents why this absence has been requested, what is the significance of this specific conference to the individual. Determine if this is covered within school policy for requests for exceptional leave of absence. Families may ask the school to speak with their religious leader about their individual cases. The absence is unlikely to be authorised unless this is listed within the schools attendance/absence policy.</p>
<p>Can my child be authorised absent from school for a religious festival/holy day?</p>	<p>Eid – is celebrated by Muslims – there are two Eid’s, on separate days. This is a festival as important to Muslims as Christmas is to Christians. Muslims would not go to work, college or school on these days. Dates change each year, but are broadly within a similar time period.</p> <p>Diwali –festival of lights has celebrations around it which usually begin after school finishes / sometimes after dusk.</p>	<p>Discuss with parents the reasons for the request but normal school attendance policy, determined by Governing Body will apply. Policy around absence should consider requests for absence of this nature. Many include one authorised day for religious festivals. Schools could have discussion with parents regarding the festival and what is involves. Schools may wish to gain advice from SACRE representatives about the festival. Parents may wish to discuss with school / governors / Education Welfare officer or SACRE reps.</p>
<p>Can my child leave school early for Friday prayers/religious festival?</p>	<p>Friday prayers is primarily an obligation on males who have reached puberty. They are obliged to attend Friday prayer in congregation. This is more likely to be requested during winter months as days are shorter so time between prayers is much less.</p>	<p>Always discuss the request with parents. Some schools have incorporated prayer opportunities into their Friday lunchtime very successfully to accommodate this religious obligation.</p>

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Requests for exceptional leave of absence

Questions that have arisen or could arise	Explanation of why the request /question may be being made – religious context	Consideration for schools / those discussing issues with parents
My child is going to another part of the UK/ another country for an extended period of time. Will you keep their school place open and authorise their absence?	There may be a few occasions where families will travel for extended periods of time to other parts of the country or another country, for example the Hajj pilgrimage which is a once in a lifetime obligation. This can occur once a year and is time critical. The Islamic calendar is based on the lunar calendar and so timing moves back approximately 10 days each year. It can be completed within two weeks.	SCC policy is clear around pupils remaining on roll to safeguard a child. Discuss with the parents the need for the travel over the extended time period, can they show proof of intention to return or proof of need to travel? Discuss individual cases with EWO and include parents where possible in the discussions as early as possible.
Can my child be absent from school to receive a saintly blessing?	On occasions certain saintly persons from a religion may visit Britain. Families may wish their child to receive a blessing from this person and will have certain times to do this. This is likely to require travel to the place being visited.	Discuss with parents this information, be specific about whom the blessing is to be from and why this is important to each individual family so you are clear as a school. Absence is unlikely to be authorised, unless the schools absence policy names this, some schools may consider this to be an exceptional reason. You may wish to discuss this further with the school or governors.

Advice around Withdrawal from RE and Collective Worship

Sometimes parents/carers can express anxieties about the study of other religions, or indeed their own religion, in the school's RE curriculum. Some may be intolerant or ignorant about a certain religion and some may have fixed views about how you should teach RE in your school. Therefore, it is important to understand what a parent is entitled to do in regard to this.

Parents/carers legally have the right to withdraw their children from parts of or all the RE curriculum in the school.

For example, several schools locally have received parental requests to withdraw children from:

- Visits to places of worship
- Learning about anything to do with religion
- Learning about specific religions e.g. Islam or Hinduism
- Learning about Christianity

What can the school do?

The Headteacher and the Governors have a responsibility to ensure that RE and Collective Worship is provided in the school and that parents/carers have information about the right to withdraw their child from all or part of the RE. This legislation has been in place since 1944 and stated again in the 1988 Education Reform Act. The Department for Education and Science (DES) produced a circular in 1989 to give its interpretation of the law. Circular 3/89, DES

The 2010 Non Statutory Guidance on RE also provided a checklist, the main points of which are included here.

Check you have the following in place:

- Information about the RE curriculum which can be found in the school prospectus and on its website. A statement about the purpose of RE and how it will be delivered is likely to reassure many parents and reduce the requests for withdrawals.
- Information about plans for RE for forthcoming classes which is given to parents in advance of the teaching.
- A procedure that is followed for occasions when parents or carers wish to withdraw their child from RE and that everyone knows what it is.

- Providing displays in school that show what each class is learning in RE and the concept being studied.
- Providing pupils' RE work for the parents to look at during the year and at parents' evenings.
- Holding parent workshops on RE (alongside other curriculum workshops).
- Ensuring all staff are teaching RE according to the agreed syllabus and that it is taught objectively with children investigating and analysing the faith concepts they encounter.
- Providing a meeting for parents if there are concerns regarding visits (for example a visit to a mosque or to a Gurdwara). Members of Southampton SACRE may be able to support or provide information for the school at parents' meetings in relation to these issues.

What does the school need to do if they receive such a request?

Parents/carers are not legally required to provide any reason for their request to withdraw their child from RE, neither are they legally required to inform the school in writing. It is a good idea to invite the parent/carer to a meeting to discuss their concerns and to make a note afterwards for yourself of their concerns, so that a record is kept in school. It is often the case that at such a meeting, the parent can be reassured that RE is delivered through an objective, enquiry approach which does not seek to indoctrinate, persuade or radicalise children towards a particular faith. An important point to note may be that no worship occurs during RE lessons.

If parents are still insistent that their child should be withdrawn, they should be advised that there is a requirement for schools to address spiritual, moral, social and cultural education, citizenship and intercultural education across the curriculum and therefore references to religious beliefs and practices may emerge when exploring these in other lessons and as part of school life. The expectation of what is embraced by "British values" has been articulated by Lord Nash. Lord Nash said: "A key part of our plan for education is to ensure children become valuable and fully rounded members of society who treat others with respect and tolerance, regardless of background. We want every school to promote the basic British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance for those of different faiths and beliefs. This ensures young people understand the importance of respect and leave school fully prepared for life in modern Britain."

Examples of the understanding and knowledge pupils are expected to

learn include:

- an understanding of how citizens can influence decision-making through the democratic process
- an understanding that the freedom to hold other faiths and beliefs is protected in law
- an acceptance that people having different faiths or beliefs to oneself (or having none) should be accepted and tolerated, and should not be the cause of prejudicial or discriminatory behaviour
- an understanding of the importance of identifying and combating discrimination.

What is the difference between Collective Worship and RE?

A school is required to deliver Collective Worship every day and children must attend this. However, parents also have the right to withdraw their child from this provision with the same rights as they have for RE. These are two very different parts of a child's school life and parents should be informed about the difference. RE is a taught subject, just like any other in the school curriculum. It is an objective enquiry into faith concepts, and teachers should be careful not to overstep the mark and involve children into areas that could be seen as worship – for example writing prayers for the Harvest festival in RE lessons. Collective Worship is a daily communal gathering which is special in the school day and includes an invitation to reflect or pray for the child. It must be mainly or broadly Christian and is completely separate from the RE syllabus. It is not an assembly which may focus on other school rules and routines, but an invitation to reflect and consider in a special way during the school day. Training and further information on Collective Worship can be found on www.youngsouthampton.org/working-with-children/schools-guidance/sacre/ as well as the Hampshire Inspection and Advisory Service website. Updates about RE can be obtained through the free newsletter provided by the Hampshire RE Centre (free registration required).

In all these matters any departure from the broadly Christian requirement must be justified in terms of the family backgrounds, ages and aptitudes of the pupils concerned. These considerations should inform:

- 1** the extent to which (if at all) any acts of collective worship in the school are not of a broadly Christian character
- 2** the extent to which the broad traditions of Christian belief are reflected in those acts of worship of a broadly Christian character
- 3** the ways in which those traditions are reflected. It is suggested that the head teacher ensure that the school plans for daily collective worship, or some other record, are kept in case of queries (DES circular).

Determination

The requirements described above, that collective worship should be wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character, should be appropriate for most pupils across the country. The 'determination' procedure, however, allows these requirements to be lifted in respect of some or all of the pupils in a school where they are inappropriate. In determining this, the standing advisory council on RE (SACRE) is to have regard to any circumstances relating to the faith backgrounds of the pupils which are relevant for deciding what character of collective worship is appropriate. The head teacher's application to the SACRE may relate either to a clearly described and defined group or to the whole school. Before considering applying for a determination in relation to the whole school, however, care should be taken to safeguard the interests of any parents of children for whom broadly Christian collective worship would be appropriate. One factor which may inform a head teacher's decision to make an application to the SACRE is the extent of withdrawals from broadly Christian collective worship. When considering whether to grant a head teacher's request, the SACRE must ensure that the proposed determination is justified by any relevant circumstances relating to the family backgrounds of the pupils concerned. When it has made a determination on the request -which can only take the form of acceptance or rejection without modification -it must communicate this in writing to the head teacher and state the date from which it should take effect and must be reviewed every five years or earlier following the Head teacher request. The Governing body must be involved in this application, review and aware of the implications.

It is for the head teacher to decide what form the alternative worship will take, although the SACRE should be informed of the proposed arrangements. The head teacher will wish to take appropriate steps to notify the governing body and parents of the new arrangements.

Where such a determination is made in respect of all or some of the pupils in the school, daily collective worship must still be provided for them. Where a determination has been granted in respect of a class or description of pupils of a particular faith or religion, the alternative collective worship may be provided for those pupils as a whole. It may not be distinctive of any particular denomination of any faith or religion, but may be distinctive of a particular faith or religion.

What should I do if I am still concerned?

Southampton SACRE can be contacted by email through: SACREinfo@southampton.gov.uk
This email is checked weekly by SACRE members or the clerk.

If your concerns centre around risk of radicalisation then you should follow your safeguarding policy, and use MASH referral with clear identification of your concerns if necessary. Additionally you may need to report under the Prevent duty, follow Prevent procedures if appropriate.

Contact SCC officers through your school improvement team or Early Help.

In addition to local knowledge and guidance from a wide range of specialists as well as representatives from faith and community groups the following references have been used in the development of this document:

- Equality Act 2010
- British Council "Guide to religion or belief equality"
- Education Acts 1988, 1993
- School Attendance guidance – DfE-0025702013 6/10/14
- School attendance parental responsibility measures – statutory guidance DfE-00256-2013 01/2015
- The Prevent duty – advice for schools and childcare providers DfE-00174-2015
- Statutory guidance Uniform DfE-00198-2013
- Equality and Human Rights Commission – www.equalityhumanrights.com/private-and-public-sector-guidance/education-providers/education-providers-school-guidance
- Suffolk Learning "Meeting the needs of Muslim pupils"
- DES circular 1/94 Religious Education and Collective Worship
- The D/EE Circular 5/94 'Education Act 1993: Sex Education in Schools,'
- 'School Security' 1997 DfEE
- <http://policeandschools.org.uk/onewebmedia/Sikh%20Pupils%20-%20Schools%20Guidelines.pdf>
- Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights on freedom of religion
- Safe Practice in PE AfPE 2012
Review due: January 2017
Southampton SACRE

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Email SACREinfo@southampton.gov.uk

www.youngsouthampton.org/working-with-children/schools-guidance/sacre/

southampton.gov.uk

