



# Withdrawal from Religious Education Policy

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Chair of Governors: Mr W Stone

	Date	Name	Signature
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# Blackfen School for Girls

## Introduction

*“All pupils are entitled to receive RE as part of a broad and balanced curriculum at school which promotes their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development”* – Religious Education in English schools: non-statutory guidance 2010. The Department for Education (DfE) guidance requires all state-funded schools in England to provide Religious Education<sup>1</sup> (RE) for all registered pupils up to the age of 18, but the law gives parents<sup>2</sup> the unconditional right to withdraw their child(ren) from collective acts of worship and/or Religious Education lessons, in accordance with Section 71 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998. At Blackfen School for Girls we respect that right.

In the UK, the law does not prescribe how religious education should be taught or organised in schools, only that schools should bear in mind that the way RE is taught should reflect the agreed syllabus of the Local Education Authority and the ethos of the school, as well as ensuring that students make good progress, learning about and from the world around them, and that Teachers’ Standards are adhered to. At Blackfen School for Girls, we believe the RE curriculum, which explores a range of religious and non-religious worldviews in an objective, balanced and educational manner, fulfils this criterion.

## Objectives

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

## Parental right to withdraw children from RE

Parents have the right to choose whether to withdraw their child from RE without influence from the school, although a school should ensure parents are informed of this right and are aware of the educational objectives and content of the RE syllabus. For students withdrawn from RE, schools have a duty to supervise them, though not to provide additional teaching or to incur extra cost; parents may provide appropriate independent work if they wish. Students will usually remain on school premises<sup>3</sup>, unless the child is lawfully receiving religious education elsewhere.

Pupils in the sixth form (aged 16+) may themselves request to be excused from collective worship without parental involvement. They may not, however, withdraw themselves from RE until they reach the age of 18. Students aged 18 or over may withdraw themselves from RE without parental consent.

## Withdrawal Procedure

If a parent wishes to withdraw their child(ren) from RE and/or collective worship, they should:

- Inform the school of their request to withdraw their child(ren) from RE and/or collective worship, and whether they intend partial or total withdrawal for their child(ren). Requests should normally be made in writing, to the Head Teacher, to ensure clarity and accurate record-keeping. Requests made via other methods (e.g. on the telephone, through the student or a note in the journal) will be followed up with written communication and confirmation.

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<sup>1</sup> Where the document states Religious Education (RE) as the subject name, this also includes Religious Studies, as per the subject name at Blackfen School for Girls

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

<sup>3</sup> Pages 27- 28 Religious education in English schools: non-statutory guidance 2010.

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- The school may offer parents the opportunity to meet with specific staff (i.e. Subject Leader for RS, Raising Attainment Co-Ordinator for the relevant Key Stage, etc.) to discuss the RE curriculum, clarify any concerns and explain the practical arrangements for withdrawal<sup>4</sup>.
  - At the meeting, Schemes of Work will be made available for the parents to read and ask questions about, should they choose to.
  - This purpose of this meeting is to ensure parents have all relevant and adequate information to make an informed choice, not as a means to change parents' minds,
- Where appropriate, parents may provide suitable alternative work for their child(ren) to complete during RE lessons. As the school is not required to provide alternative RE work, it is not the responsibility of the class teacher to set or mark alternative work. Students who have been withdrawn will be allocated to different classes on an independent basis in order to ensure suitable supervision. These arrangements may need to change from week to week.
- If a student is withdrawn from assembly, the Form Tutor, Head of Year and Student Support Officer will also be informed to ensure adequate supervision during the assembly.
- In addition to the above, parents also have the right opt out of any visits to places of worship. Prior notification will be necessary to ensure adequate supervision is organised for the student.

Whilst Blackfen School for Girls respects the rights of parents to withdraw their child(ren) from RE, these rights do not apply to parental requests to withdraw their child from a non-RE subject that may teach about religion or religious beliefs, e.g., History or English.

## Conclusion

By following these guidelines, the withdrawal of children from Religious Education will be clear, efficient and safe for the children.

## This policy is informed by:

- Education Reform Act 1988 (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1988/40/contents>)
- School Standards and Framework Act 1998 (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/31/contents>)
- DfE guidance on RE and collective worship (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/re-and-collective-worship-in-academies-and-free-schools/religious-education-re-and-collective-worship-in-academies-and-free-schools>)

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<sup>4</sup> Parents do not have to disclose their reason(s) for withdrawing their child from RE, but it is helpful for the school and subject leader to understand the reasons for withdrawal so they may seek to improve religious education provision.