Religious Education

In the UK, parents have a statutory right to withdraw their child from all or part of Religious Education (RE) lessons and acts of collective worship. This right is enshrined in Section 71 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

Key Statements and Legal Position

Parental Right: The law states that if a parent requests their child be excused from receiving RE or attending religious worship, the pupil must be excused until the request is withdrawn.

No Reason Required: Parents do not have to give a reason for the withdrawal request.

Scope of Withdrawal: Parents can request withdrawal from the entire RE syllabus or specific parts of it. The school must grant even partial withdrawal requests.

Alternative Provision (Parent's Responsibility): The right of withdrawal is based on the grounds that parents wish to make their own provision for their child's religious education. This alternative provision is the parents' responsibility and must not incur extra cost for the school or local authority.

School's Duty of Care: If a pupil is withdrawn, the school is responsible for supervising them but is not required to provide alternative teaching. The pupil will usually remain on school premises, perhaps in a library or another area. The time spent out of RE should not be used for other curriculum subjects like extra maths.

Limitations: The right of withdrawal generally applies only to the specific timetabled RE lessons and collective worship. It does not extend to other national curriculum subjects where religion or beliefs may arise incidentally (e.g., in history, art, or PSHE lessons).

How to make a request

Contact the Headteacher: All requests should be directed to the headteacher in writing (a letter or email).

Review: The school may review the withdrawal arrangement annually with parents.