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## The Swallowtail Federation of Church Schools

### The right of withdrawal from Religious Education

The Swallowtail Federation of Church Schools actively promotes tolerance by sharing and celebrating different faiths, beliefs and cultures. Collective worship and discussions revolve around values which are inclusive of all faiths, beliefs and cultures. These are supported by learning in RE and PSHCE. When possible we have different speakers sharing their experiences of the world and other cultures. We hold regular festival assemblies, e.g. Harvest, Diwali.

Parents do have the right to withdraw their child from all or part of religious education and the Swallowtail Federation of Church Schools follows the guidelines from the National Association of the teaching of Religious Education.

'The parent of a pupil at a community, foundation or voluntary school (or pupils themselves if they are aged 18 or over) may request that they be excused from all or part of the religious education (RE) provided. However, much has changed since this right was enshrined in law. In the past, the subject was religious *instruction* rather than religious *education* as it is now. Religion and belief have become more visible in public life in recent years, making it even more important that all pupils should have an opportunity to engage in RE. Schools should ensure that parents who wish to withdraw their children from RE are aware of its aims and what is covered in the RE curriculum and that they are given the opportunity to discuss this if they wish. It should be made clear whether the withdrawal is from the whole RE curriculum or specific parts of it. No reasons need be given.

Whilst parents or carers have a right to withdraw children from RE, they should note that children may also encounter religions and beliefs in other areas of the curriculum from which there is no right of withdrawal. On occasion, spontaneous questions about religious matters are raised by pupils or issues related to religion arise in other subjects such as history or citizenship. For example, schools promote community cohesion and help pupils to understand ideas about identity and diversity within both religious and non-religious contexts.

#### Managing the right of withdrawal

Parents have the right to choose whether or not to withdraw their child from RE without influence from the school, although a school should ensure parents and carers are informed of this right, through the school website and prospectus. Where parents have requested

that their child be withdrawn, their right must be respected, and where RE is integrated in the curriculum, the school will need to discuss the arrangements with the parents or carers to explore how the child's withdrawal can be best accommodated. If pupils are withdrawn from RE, schools have a duty to supervise them, though not to provide additional teaching or to incur extra cost. Pupils will usually remain on school premises.

Schools should ensure that parents who want to withdraw their children from RE are aware of the educational objectives and content of the RE syllabus and that the agreed syllabus is relevant to all pupils, respecting their personal beliefs. They should be made aware of its learning outcomes and what is covered and should be given the opportunity to discuss these. In this way, parents can make an informed decision; the school may wish review their request in discussion with parents each year.

Where a request for withdrawal is made, the school must comply and excuse the pupil until the request is rescinded. Though not legally required, it is good practice for a head teacher to invite parents to discuss their **written request**. Where a pupil has been withdrawn, the law provides for alternative arrangements to be made for RE of the kind the parent wishes their child to receive.

*Section 71(3), School Standards and Framework Act 1998*

Such RE could be provided at the school in question, or the pupil could be sent to another school where such RE is provided, if this is reasonably convenient. Where neither approach is practicable, outside arrangements can be made to provide the RE which the parent wishes the pupil to receive; the pupil may be withdrawn from the school for a reasonable period of time to allow them to attend this RE externally. Outside arrangements for RE are allowed, as long as the local authority (LA) is satisfied that any interference with the pupil's attendance at school will affect only the start or end of a school session. If the school is a secondary school and parents have asked for alternative RE to be provided in accordance with the tenets of a particular religion or denomination, and if satisfactory arrangements cannot be made for that RE to be provided elsewhere, the LA must provide facilities for the alternative RE to be provided at the school, unless there are special circumstances which would make it unreasonable to do so.

In the case of a pupil at a maintained boarding school where a pupil over 18, or the parents of a pupil below 18, request that the pupil be allowed to receive RE in accordance with the tenets of a particular religion or denomination outside school hours, the governing body must make arrangements to give the pupil a reasonable opportunity to attend such RE. The arrangements made by the governing body may include making facilities available at the school for this form of RE, but any such arrangements cannot be funded by the LA or the school budget.' ([http://www.eriding.net/re/agreed\\_syllabus\\_2011/pages/statutory-requirements/the-right-of-withdrawal.html](http://www.eriding.net/re/agreed_syllabus_2011/pages/statutory-requirements/the-right-of-withdrawal.html))

To request a withdrawal from all or part of religious education parents are asked to put this request in writing to:

Mrs Sheila Watts, Chair of Governors, Swallowtail Federation of Church Schools, Sutton Church of England Infant School, Laxfield Rd, Sutton, Norfolk NR12 9QP

Or

Email: [office@sutton.norfolk.sch.uk](mailto:office@sutton.norfolk.sch.uk) and mark for the urgent attention of The chair of Governors.