

# St Aidan's Catholic Primary School

"Living and growing in Christ"

## Right of Withdrawal from Religious Education and/or Collective Worship Policy



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# Contents

1. Legal Basis
2. Parental Requests
3. School Provision
4. Off-Site Provision
5. Limitations

*This school policy is taken from the Catholic Education Service guidance.*

## 1. Legal Basis

Schools must ensure that religious education is provided as part of the school's basic curriculum. In Catholic schools this provision must be in accordance with the teachings, doctrines, discipline and general and particular norms of the Catholic Church.

Pupils in Catholic schools are required by law to take part in an act of collective worship on each school day which must be in accordance with the rites, practices, disciplines and liturgical norms of the Catholic Church.

## 2. Parental Requests

Whilst it is very rare that children in Catholic schools do not fully participate in the religious education curriculum and collective worship of the school, it is possible that the school receives a request that a pupil:

- be withdrawn from religious education and/or collective worship, or
- receive religious education which is different to that taught at the school.

Parents of pupils are permitted, by law, to request that their child is withdrawn from receiving all or part of religious education and/or collective worship given at the school and any such request shall stand until such time that the parent's request is withdrawn.

Where a parental request is received, the school will seek to arrange a meeting with the parent to:

- better understand the basis for the request
- establish the religious issues about which the parent objects to their child being taught
- discuss the practical implications of withdrawal and the reasonable accommodations the school will make
- confirm the parental request for withdrawal.

### 3. School Provision

If pupils are withdrawn from religious education and/or collective worship, schools have a duty to supervise them, though not to provide additional teaching or to incur extra costs.

The withdrawn pupil may be moved to another venue within the school if possible or the pupil may remain in the RE classroom but will not participate in the RE lesson. If the pupil is moved to another venue within the school they must be supervised.

If a pupil is withdrawn and alternative arrangements cannot be made for the type of RE the parents' desire for example, due to resources/timetabling etc, it is the parents' responsibility to provide materials for their child which have clear outcomes and are connected to the faith/philosophy/world view of the parents.

Any withdrawn pupil will not study other aspects of the National Curriculum during times they have been withdrawn from RE and/or collective worship as time is already given over to these subjects within the school's basic curriculum.

It is important to bear in mind that the parental right to withdraw a child from Religious Education was intended by Parliament to be a 'conscience clause' and not to be used as a general opt-out clause. Care should be taken not to confuse a request for absence due to religious observance with a request to withdraw a child from RE and/or collective worship.

### 4. Off-Site Provision

Where a pupil has been withdrawn from religious education and their parent(s) wants them to receive religious education of a kind which is not provided at the school during the periods of withdrawal, the parent may make alternative arrangements for the pupil to receive religious education of the kind they desire, to take place off the school's premises. Such an arrangement is only permitted where the local authority is satisfied that the alternative arrangements for religious education off the school site will not interfere with their attendance at school. Therefore, absence for this purpose is only permitted at the beginning or end of a school session.

### 5. Limitations

The right to withdraw is specifically linked to religious education and/or collective worship so that care will need to be taken where the school teaches religious education in an integrated form along with other National Curriculum subjects, from which there is no right of withdrawal.

The guidance provides that "the right of withdrawal does not extend to other areas of the curriculum when, as may happen on occasion, spontaneous questions on religious matters are raised by pupils or there are issues related to religion that arise in other subjects such as history or citizenship". It also provides that "where religious education is integrated in the

curriculum, the school needs to discuss the arrangements with the parents or carers to explore how the child's withdrawal can be best accommodated".

In a Catholic school the expectation is that religious education and worship permeates throughout the life of the school and the whole school curriculum. Consequently, the level of integration of religious education and collective worship into the school curriculum is likely to be far greater than in community schools.