

# Education, Children and Families Committee

10am, Tuesday 4 March 2014

## Religious Observance in Non-Denominational Schools

Item number	7.1
Report number	
Wards	All

### Links

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Coalition pledges	<a href="#">P5</a>
Council outcomes	<a href="#">CO2</a>
Single Outcome Agreement	<a href="#">SO3</a>

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# Executive summary

## Religious Observance in Non-Denominational Schools

### Summary

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The Council's Petitions Committee, at its meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2014, considered two petitions on the matter of Religious Observance and Co-operation with Churches. The Committee requested a report to be submitted to the Education, Children and Families Committee in March providing further information on:

- i) The estimated cost of holding a referendum
- ii) The current position for religious observance in schools in Edinburgh
- iii) What constitutes religious observance?
- iv) Details of the training Head Teachers were provided with on religious observance
- v) Details of the organisations that visit schools in relation to religious observance and what activities they provide
- vi) Details of further discussion with both sets of petitioners, the deputation and other groups.

This report provides the information requested above.

### Recommendations

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The Committee is requested to:

- 1 Note the information in this report regarding religious observance in non-denominational schools.
- 2 Agree to receive a future report on the outcomes of the second survey including details of the organisations that visit schools in relation to Religious Observance.
- 3 Note that the revised Head Teacher guidelines will take account of any recommendations reached by the Scottish Parliament on Religious Observance and the recent 3-18 RME Impact report published by Education Scotland in February 2014.

## Measures of success

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Religious observance will be delivered in line with legislation and City of Edinburgh recommendations.

## Financial impact

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Potential costs of holding a referendum on religious observance are between £500-600K. There is no budget identified to meet these costs which would be a budget pressure.

## Equalities impact

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Within the delivery of the policy on religious observance all pupils have the opportunity to participate. There are measures in place for parents to request that their child opts out of religious observance if they wish.

## Sustainability impact

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There are no adverse impacts arising from this report.

## Consultation and engagement

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- The development of the City of Edinburgh position paper on Religious Observance was developed by a cross sector working group led by the Quality Improvement Officer.
- All schools have been involved in developing their plans for religious observance in consultation with their Parent Council body.
- Following the Petitions Committee meeting on 3 June 2014, individual meetings have taken place with representatives from both petitions.

## Background reading / external references

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- Scottish Government circular  
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/920/0113849.pdf>
- City of Edinburgh Position Paper on Religious Observance

## Religious Observance in Non-Denominational Schools

### 1. Background

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- 1.1 The Scottish Government's letter of 21 February 2011 replaced the guidance previously contained within Circular 1/2005. The Circular was updated to reflect the implementation of Curriculum for Excellence and applies to all primary, secondary and special schools. The letter clarified the current position regarding the provision of religious observance in Scottish schools and set out action for local authorities in planning the provision of religious observance
- 1.2 Scottish Government Ministers consider religious observance to be an important educational experience for children and young people at all stages of primary and secondary in denominational and non-denominational schools. They accept the recommendations of the *Religious Observance Review Group Report* of May 2004. In so doing, Ministers believe that learning and teaching can build on Scotland's strong Christian traditions without compromising them, while also promoting the understanding of, and respect for other faiths and beliefs."
- 1.3 Two petitions were tabled at the Council's Petitions Committee on 3 June 2013. The first (PE1487) was presented by a parent who is a member of the Edinburgh Secular Society and was entitled "Remove Religious Observance from non denominational schools". This petition received 896 valid signatures. The second petition was tabled by Ewan Aitken. It received 1522 valid signatures. Subsequently, on 28 January 2014, the Church of Scotland and the Humanist Society made a joint submission to the Petition Committee of the Scottish Government calling for Religious Observance to be renamed Time for Reflection.

### 2. Main report

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- 2.1. The Council's Petitions Committee, at its meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2014, considered two petitions on the matter of Religious Observance and Co-operation with Churches. The Committee requested a report to be submitted to the Education, Children and Families Committee in March providing further information on:
  - i) The estimated cost of holding a referendum
  - ii) The current position for religious observance in schools in Edinburgh
  - iii) What constitutes religious observance?

- iv) Details of the training Head Teachers were provided with on religious observance
- v) Details of the organisations that visit schools in relation to religious observance and what activities they provide
- vi) Details of further discussion with both sets of petitioners, the deputation and other groups.

This report provides the information requested above.

### **The estimated cost of holding a referendum**

- 2.2.1 Religious Observance is delivered in accordance with the 1980 Education Act. *“It shall not be lawful for an education authority to discontinue religious observance....unless and until a resolution in favour of such discontinuance duly passed by the authority has been submitted to a poll of the local government electors for the education area....and has been approved by a majority of the electorate thereat.”*
- 2.2.2 Officers in the Children and Families department have consulted with the Council’s Depute Returning Officer in the Election Team to assess the potential costs of such a referendum.
- 2.2.3 There are no clear rules specified in the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 to be applied for such a ballot. It is assumed that the rules would be broadly in line with those applied for Scottish Government Local Government Elections.
- 2.2.4 The referendum would give the decision to the local government electors within the City of Edinburgh Council area. The most up to date Electoral Register will not be published until 10 March 2014 so for the purposes of these costings, the Electorate that has been applied is that which voted in the local government elections in May 2012. This was a total of 331,954 eligible voters.
- 2.2.5 Two main options are available for a local referendum. These would be (a) a poll of these electors through the provision of polling places and postal votes and (b) an all postal ballot.

Option (a) – a “normal” election

- 2.2.6 This process would involve the production of a ballot paper, the hire and staffing of polling places across the city, the issue, return and verification of postal votes (currently around 65,000 postal voters) and the counting of the ballot papers. Polls across an electorate of 331,954 electors applying the standard cost rules cost in the order of £650K. Were the rules to be modified, for example, by an extended voting period, with fewer polling places, some costs could be saved. Similarly, if a low turnout was anticipated, then the number of polling stations could be reduced. However these would be departures from the standard approach. Expected costs, even with the possibility of the above savings would be at least £500K.

#### Option (b) – an all postal ballot

- 2.2.7 An all postal ballot has been piloted for some electoral events in the past and is often used for union ballots. While this may appear to be a cheaper option, with an electorate of 331,954, the costs are still substantial. The main cost elements would be the production of the ballot paper, its postage to the electors and the costs of postage for the return of the ballot papers. A decision would also be required in respect of the verification of the identity of the electors. To address electoral integrity concerns, postal votes by law are now required to provide identification with their postal ballot. These are verified to affirm identifiers of the elector prior to their vote being open and counted. Existing postal voters have provided their identifiers but where these are required of the remaining electors there would be a substantial cost in terms of collection. The costs of an all postal ballot will be in the region of £600K with the key costs being the postage and return of the ballot papers to the electorate of almost one third of a million.

#### Referendum – 2005 Transport Referendum

- 2.2.8 An all postal ballot was undertaken across Edinburgh in February 2005. This event cost £529,694. Allowing for the larger electorate and inflation since 2005, the cost in 2014 would be anticipated to be approximately £600K.

#### On line voting

- 2.2.9 A further option may be on-line voting. There are software solutions which allow for secure internet voting however these are untested in an event of this scale and there are some participation and integrity concerns. In addition to the software costs, there are costs associated with informing each elector of their “Password”.

#### Publicity and Voter Awareness

- 2.2.10 The electorate would require to be adequately informed of the issues. This would require a publicity campaign with material sent to each elector. The printing and distribution of such materials would have to be costed.

#### Support from the Elections Team

- 2.2.11 The Council’s Elections Team has broad experience of delivering various electoral events to the Edinburgh electorate. Should a decision be made to progress with a referendum on this issue, work would need to be appropriately sequenced to align with a busy electoral calendar and resources would require to be found to support the Elections Team in this role.

## Summary

- 2.2.12 The costs associated with holding a referendum are significant and are estimated to be between £500-600K. There is no budget identified to meet these costs and so this would represent a significant budget pressure.

### **The current position for religious observance in schools in Edinburgh**

- 2.3.1 In 2011, the City of Edinburgh Council produced Head Teacher Guidelines outlining the Scottish Government's requirement for religious observance as stated in their letter of February 2011. The guidelines, now known as Position Paper 16, were produced by a working party comprising Head Teachers from primary, secondary and special sectors as well as leading practitioners. The City of Edinburgh Council, in their Key Priorities Document issued to Head Teachers in March 2011 and May 2012, stated the expectation that all primary and secondary schools would comply with the legislation by August 2013.
- 2.3.2 A comprehensive survey was issued to the Head Teachers of all primary and secondary schools in June 2013. This was followed in October 2013 by an audit of all school websites to ascertain the extent to which the requirements were in place. The figures stated below correspond to data collected in the survey and subsequent audit.

#### Primary Sector

- 2.3.3 There were 87 schools in the **primary sector** at the time of the survey, with 14 of these schools being denominational schools. 60 individuals in 13 primary schools opted out of religious observance. A further 14 individuals in three primary schools opted out when the religious observance took place in the local church but not when it took place in school. There were seven families in three primary schools who opted out of religious observance. Actual numbers were not stated. In 68 primary schools, there were no pupils who opted out.
- 2.3.4 In the primary sector, the required information was on almost all school websites. Where this information was not available, this has been followed up. Where websites were under construction, newsletters had been issued to parents with the required information. A number of schools had only a very brief outline of their religious observance programme, stating dates and broad themes. Most schools used the term "Assemblies" and referred to religious observance within that. Other terms used were "Gatherings" and "Community Get Togethers". There was particularly good practice in 9 primary schools. An example of this was where pupils had been directly involved in the planning and delivery of the relevant assembly. There were concerns in 6 primary schools where the programme for religious observance was run solely by the school chaplain. These schools will be visited by the Quality Improvement Officer with a view to planning a more balanced programme.

### Secondary Sector

2.3.5 There are 23 schools in the **secondary sector**, three of which are denominational schools. A total of three individuals in three separate secondary schools opted out of religious observance. In 20 secondary schools there were no pupils who chose to opt out of religious observance. In two schools, the programme of RO included identified “opt out” assemblies.

2.3.6 In the secondary sector, the required information was on all except two school websites. The two schools were giving this their immediate attention. Most secondary schools used the terms “Time for Reflection” or “Celebration of Values”. There was particularly good practice in 8 secondary schools. An example of this was again where the relevant event was student led.

### Special schools sector

2.3.7 There are 14 special schools in Edinburgh. Six of these schools had no school website at the time of the audit. A further six made no reference to religious observance on their website. Two schools did share their religious observance programme on their website. A separate quality assurance exercise for this sector will take place to ascertain the extent and quality of implementation of the Head Teacher Guidelines.

### Early years sector

2.3.8 The early years sector is excluded from the Scottish Government legislation on religious observance.

## **What Constitutes Religious Observance?**

2.4.1 The Scottish Government, in their letter of 21 February 2011, accept the recommendations of the *Religious Observance Review Group Report* of May 2004. These aims and definition are repeated in City of Edinburgh’s Headteacher Guidelines (Position Paper 16) of November 2011. (Appendix 1) These guidelines will be reviewed prior to the start of session 2014-15 by a cross-sectoral working party in consultation with appropriate stakeholders.

2.4.2 The Report of the Religious Observance Review Group defines the aims of religious observance as:

*‘To promote the spiritual development of all members of the school community; to express and celebrate the shared values of the school community.’*

The Report of the Religious Observance Review Group defines the term for use in schools in Scotland as:

*‘Community acts which aim to promote the spiritual development of all members of the school community and express and celebrate the shared values of the school community.’*

## **Details of the Training Head Teachers were Provided with on Religious Observance**



- 2.5.1 Following the publication of the Head Teacher Guidelines (Position Paper 16) in November 2011, requirements were shared through discussion at sector specific Head Teacher meetings.
- 2.5.2 Key Priorities Documents were issued in March 2011 and May 2012 as part of the support to schools for improvement planning. These documents make reference to the requirement to implement the guidelines in line with the Scottish Government's letter of February 2011. The Quality Improvement team followed up the Key Priority Documents with individual visits to schools.
- 2.5.3 Almost every cluster of schools was visited by the Quality Improvement Officer over a three year period (2011-2013) to discuss moderation of Religious and Moral Education/Religious Education in Roman Catholic Schools. Discussion of religious observance took place as part of these meetings.
- 2.5.4 A comprehensive survey was issued to all Head Teachers in June 2013 requesting information on the current position of religious observation in their school. As part of this survey, there was an opportunity for Head Teachers to request additional support with their religious observance programme.
- 2.5.5 A CPD event for Head Teachers took place on 18 April 2012. This was organised by the Quality Improvement Officer and delivered by a secondary teacher of RME who had completed the training in Religious Observance: Design and Practice through Glasgow University. Evaluations were all positive.
- 2.5.6 Information regarding the training in *Religious Observance: Design and Practice* was issued to all Head Teachers.
- 2.5.7 Education Scotland have recently published a report on RME/Roman Catholic RE as part of their 3-18 Curriculum Impact Series in February 2014. The Quality Improvement Officer and three schools in Edinburgh were involved in providing evidence for this report. Feedback from the evidence gathering experience was shared with all secondary teachers of RME/Roman Catholic RE in October 2013, and attention was brought to the imminent publication of the report in visits to cluster primary Head Teachers as outlined in 2.23 above.

#### **Details of the organisations that visit schools in relation to Religious Observance and what activities they provide**

- 2.6.1 This information is currently being collected. A commitment has been made to undertake an audit of this provision prior to the revision of the Head Teacher Guidelines (Position Paper 16), so that cognisance can be taken of matters arising from such an audit. The recent 3-18 RME Impact Report published by Education Scotland recommends "schools should seek and follow clear local authority guidance for visiting speakers."

#### **Details of further discussion with both sets of petitioners, the deputation and other groups**

2.7.1 A meeting between City of Edinburgh (CEC) representatives and representatives from the Church of Scotland, the Chaplaincy Service and RME teaching staff was held on 10 January 2014 following the recommendation of the December Education Committee on Religious Observance.

2.7.2 The following actions were agreed:

- The draft remit of chaplaincy teams will be shared.
- The CEC HT guidelines will be reviewed by November 2014.
- Further briefings will be provided for Headteachers.
- Good practice will be shared.

2.7.3 This meeting between City of Edinburgh representatives and representatives from the Edinburgh Secular Society was held on 30 January 2014 following the recommendation by the December Education Committee on Religious Observance.

2.7.4 The following actions were agreed:

- CEC HT guidelines to be reviewed by Nov 2014.
- The provision of external religious organisations in schools will be audited with immediate effect and the awareness of Head Teachers will be raised with regard to organisations with extreme views.
- A further survey will audit which resources schools are using for the delivery of religious observance.
- School chaplains will be made aware of the Equal Opportunities Policy.
- Representatives of the Edinburgh Secular Society were invited to witness Religious Observance in schools.

2.7.5 Both meetings had been positive. It was agreed that the minutes of these meetings with both sets of petitioners would be shared with both parties.

### **3. Recommendations**

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The Committee is requested to:

- 3.1. Note the information in this report regarding religious observance in non-denominational schools.
- 3.2. Agree to receive a future report on the outcomes of the second survey including details of the organisations that visit schools in relation to Religious Observance.
- 3.3. Note that the revised Head Teacher guidelines will take account of any recommendations reached by the Scottish Parliament on Religious Observance and the recent 3-18 RME Impact report published by Education Scotland in February 2014.

## Gillian Tee

Director of Children and Families

### Links

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<b>Coalition pledges</b>	P5. Seek to ensure the smooth introduction of the Curriculum for Excellence and that management structures within our schools support the new curriculum
<b>Council outcomes</b>	CO2. Our children and young people are successful learners, confident individuals and responsible citizens making a positive contribution to their communities
<b>Single Outcome Agreement</b>	SO3. Edinburgh's children and young people enjoy their childhood and fulfil their potential
<b>Appendices</b>	Religious Observance in Schools Nov 2011 Position Paper 16

# Religious Observance in Schools

## November 2011

### Curriculum for Excellence

### Position Paper 16

#### PROVISION OF RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE IN SCHOOLS INTRODUCTION

In the HMIE report, *Standards and Quality in Secondary Schools: Religious and Moral Education, 1995-2000*, concern was expressed about some aspects of religious observance and in particular its frequency. There followed a review of arrangements regarding all aspects of religious observance undertaken by the Religious Observance Review Group. Its report was published in 2004.

As a result of this report the Scottish Executive Education Department issued *Circular 1/2005: Provision of Religious Observance in Scottish Schools*. The Scottish Government's letter of 21 February 2011 replaces the guidance previously contained within Circular 1/2005. The Circular has been updated to reflect the implementation of Curriculum for Excellence and applies to all primary, secondary and special schools.

Scottish Government Ministers consider religious observance to be an important educational experience for children and young people at all stages of primary and secondary school. They accept the recommendations of the *Religious Observance Review Group Report* of May 2004. In so doing, Ministers believe that learning and teaching can build on Scotland's strong Christian traditions without compromising them, while also promoting the understanding of, and respect for other faiths and beliefs.

Many school communities are characterised by a diversity of religious beliefs and practices reflecting a range of religious and other stances. It is important that all pupils and staff can participate with integrity in the forms of religious observance devised by their school without compromise to their personal faith stances. This can best be guaranteed by involving a range of people from the school and community in the preparation, planning and presentation of the assembly or other gathering. Pupils should have a key role in this process.

One implication of this diversity is that the forms of religious observance may differ from school to school. Schools are therefore encouraged to make decisions based on local needs and circumstances. Full consultation should take place with all interested

parties on how religious observance can be implemented in each school community. Full consultation should also take place on what to call the events that meet the religious observance requirements for that school community<sup>1</sup>. The unifying principle behind the different approaches to religious observance will be the aims set out in this paper.

### **AIMS OF RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE**

The aims of religious observance are defined as:

*'To promote the spiritual development of all members of the school community; to express and celebrate the shared values of the school community.'*<sup>2</sup>

### **DEFINITION OF RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE**

The Report of the Review Group defines the term for use in schools in Scotland as:

*'Community acts which aim to promote the spiritual development of all members of the school community and express and celebrate the shared values of the school community.'*<sup>3</sup>

Three key issues emerge from this definition :

- building a sense of community;
- understanding spiritual development; and
- celebrating shared values.

### **Building A Sense Of Community**

Regular assemblies or other gatherings for religious observance provide opportunities for the school community to reflect on, and develop, a deeper understanding of the dignity and worth of each individual and the shared values of the school community. Good religious observance strengthens pupils' sense of belonging to their school. It is a basic premise that the way in which religious observance in schools is implemented should always be justifiable on educational grounds.

### **Understanding Spiritual Development**

Spiritual development *'includes being helped to recognise, reflect upon and develop a deeper understanding of the value and worth of each individual which comes from one's dignity as a person'*.<sup>4</sup>

The spiritual dimension comes from what makes us human and this can be seen and expressed in many ways. There are many contexts across the curriculum that encourage pupils to consider matters from a spiritual perspective. The potential for spiritual development is open to every one and is not confined to the development of religious beliefs. In spite of the move away from involvement with formal religion in contemporary Scottish society, there is evidence of a growing interest in the spiritual dimension. Many people outwith formal religion would use the term spiritual to describe key aspects of their experience. Religious observance plays an important role in the spiritual development of all members of the school community.

### **Celebrating Shared Values**

Many schools would identify and promote values such as 'honesty, liberty, justice, fairness and concern for others'<sup>5</sup> as common shared values in our society. It is also true that different communities hold values that are particular to their own tradition. These values should be acknowledged, the right of people to hold them should be respected and pupils should be encouraged to reflect on these values and the life stances which they reflect.

### **RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE AND ORGANISED WORSHIP**

Religious observance is not concerned in the main with organised worship. Worship is a free response of an individual and community to what is considered worthy of

worship. This response involves three elements: belief, desire to worship and the commitment to life stances. An organised act of worship is based on the assumption that those present share these elements.

In distinguishing between religious observance and organised acts of worship, the following statement should be considered:

*' Where the school community, whether denominational or non-denominational, is continuous with a faith community, that community's faith in "the focus of worship", may be assumed and worship may be considered to be appropriate as part of the formal activity of the school.*

*' Where, as in most non-denominational schools, there is a diversity of beliefs and practices, the review group believes that the appropriate context for an organised act of worship is within the informal curriculum as part of the range of activities offered for example by religions, groups, chaplains and other religious leaders.'*<sup>6</sup>

## **ASSEMBLIES AND RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE**

The approach to religious observance should be that outlined in the Scottish Government's letter of 21 February 2011:

*'Scottish Government Ministers welcome the tradition that, in Roman Catholic denominational schools, Catholic Liturgy will largely shape the nature and frequency of religious observance activities in the classroom and in the wider school community.'*<sup>7</sup>

*'In recognition of Scotland's Christian heritage, non-denominational schools are also encouraged to draw upon the rich resources of this tradition when planning religious observance. However, many school communities contain pupils and staff from faiths other than Christianity or with no faith commitment, and this must be taken fully into account in supporting spiritual development. It is of central importance that all pupils and staff can participate with integrity in forms of religious observance without compromise to their personal faith.'*<sup>8</sup>

At present school assemblies are the most common vehicle for delivering religious observance. A clear distinction has to be drawn between assemblies devised for the delivery of religious observance and assemblies which support other purposes. Communicating day-to-day administrative arrangements and information about extracurricular activities at an assembly is important for the life and work of the school. However, this should be kept separate from occasions that are specifically set aside for religious observance. It is important for those organising and leading religious observance that the overall integrity and purpose of the event are kept distinctive and are not compromised.

## **FREQUENCY OF RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE**

The frequency of religious observance needs to balance the impact on the spiritual development of the school community with providing a valuable and inclusive experience.

Every school should provide opportunities for religious observance at least six times in a school year in addition to traditional celebrations central to the life of the school community. Many primary schools value weekly religious observance as part of their regular assembly programme and it is expected that this will continue. While ensuring that religious observance is sufficiently frequent, the emphasis should be on quality of the experience for pupils rather than quantity.

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF GOOD RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE**

In order to ensure that the experience of religious observance is of a high quality those planning and leading it should look to ensure that the following characteristics are evident.

**Location:** All schools have areas such as assembly halls or gymnasias which have the potential for being appropriate locations for religious observance. It is important that every attempt is made to ensure that pupils can participate comfortably. In addition, to take account of the fact that religious observance may at times be organised on a group basis, schools should also look to have a smaller area available if required.

**Leadership:** The Head Teacher, staff, chaplains, pupils and visitors from the community or organisations can all make effective contributions to religious observance. Sharing the leadership brings many benefits such as offering a range of perspectives on a variety of issues for pupils to consider. Good planning and clear expectations are important to ensure that the experience appeals to pupils and engages their interest.

**Sensitivity:** Religious observance should invite pupils through an interesting and appealing stimulus to consider and reflect on a range of issues that relate to their experience. As in good teaching the stimulus for reflection should look to draw on

- incidents which occur in the life of the school or in the local, national or international communities,
- a programme of values which the school wishes its pupils and staff to reflect upon
- the annual cycle of religious festivals.

**Atmosphere:** Good religious observance happens in atmosphere where pupils feel relaxed and open to learn from what is being said and done.

## **CHAPLAINS**

A chaplain plays an important role in the life and work of the school as a resource person and as someone who can offer pastoral and spiritual support. A full discussion should take place between the Head Teacher and the chaplain on how religious observance should be planned and implemented in order to address the needs of the school community. The discussion should be based on the premise that the way in which religious observance in schools is implemented should be justifiable on educational grounds.

The role of the chaplain or chaplaincy team includes:

- being a member of the Religious Observance Team;
- being a resource for the RE curriculum;
- providing pastoral care for staff and pupils (and if appropriate, their families);
- being available at community events in the life of the school;
- having a key role at times of extreme difficulty; and
- providing a bridge and common resource across the cluster.

## **THE RIGHTS OF PARENTS**

Under the terms of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980, parents have the right to ask for their child to be withdrawn from religious observance. The school will deal with such requests with sensitivity and understanding. Head Teachers are encouraged to meet with any parent wishing to withdraw their child to ensure that they are clear about the school policy. In particular, parents should be reassured that religious observance adopts an open and respectful approach and does not seek to compromise the beliefs of any pupils or their families.

## **DENOMINATIONAL SCHOOLS**

It is recognized that in denominational schools, there is a distinctive emphasis on

nurturing the faith of pupils in line with gospel values. This is achieved through the school ethos, the religious education curriculum and in particular religious observance. In denominational schools organised acts of worship are considered appropriate as part of the formal activity of the school and will continue to feature in religious observance. Specific support and guidance for developing religious observance in denominational schools is available to schools through the Scottish Catholic Education Service.

## **NURSERY SCHOOLS**

There is no formal requirement for religious observance in nursery schools and classes. However, there are many opportunities to help children develop an early awareness of different religious and cultural groups and their traditions. By marking significant religious celebrations and exploring shared values as well as matters of common concern, children can build up a sense of their own uniqueness. In this way their journey of spiritual development begins. Such activities provide important foundational experiences for young children on which primary and secondary school can build.

## **RACE EQUALITY POLICY**

Central to this document is the principle of respect for others. Religious, cultural and personal characteristics permeate and enrich the life and work of our schools. This diversity of belief and tradition provides an ideal context in which pupils can learn about and so learn from what is important in the lives of others. The approach to religious observance in this paper recognises and welcomes diversity and promotes respectful understanding. In this way the guidance is fully consistent with other council policies relating to race equality.

## **QUALITY ASSURANCE**

Schools will provide religious observance events of high quality. Each school will appoint a Religious Observance Team under the direction of the Head Teacher or nominated depute Head Teacher to supervise the religious observance programme and events. Regular evaluation of the programme and the events will be the responsibility of the Head Teacher or nominated depute Head Teacher. The quality of religious observance may also be subject to external evaluation by officers of the authority or HMI Inspectors.

## **SUPPORT FOR SCHOOLS**

A list of helpful support materials and websites is contained in the Appendix.

### **Appendix**

#### **Helpful Resources**

[www.ltscotland.org.uk/religiousobservance/keydocuments/index.asp](http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/religiousobservance/keydocuments/index.asp)

[www.churchofscotland.org.uk/resources/subjects/schools-resources](http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/resources/subjects/schools-resources)

[www.fischymusic.com](http://www.fischymusic.com)

[www.alwaleed.ed.ac.uk](http://www.alwaleed.ed.ac.uk)

[www.eifa.org.uk](http://www.eifa.org.uk)

[www.assemblies.org.uk](http://www.assemblies.org.uk)

[www.gla.ac.uk/departments/religiouseducation/coursesanddegreeprogrammes/religiousobservancedesignandpractice](http://www.gla.ac.uk/departments/religiouseducation/coursesanddegreeprogrammes/religiousobservancedesignandpractice)

<sup>1</sup> Scottish Government letter 21 February 2011: para. 6

<sup>2</sup> Religious Observance Review Group Report: p12.



- <sup>3</sup> Religious Observance Review Group Report: p12
- <sup>4</sup> Religious Observance Review Group Report: p12
- <sup>5</sup> Religious and Moral Education 5-14 National Guidelines
- <sup>6</sup> Religious Observance Review Group Report p16.
- <sup>7</sup> Scottish Government letter 21 February 2011: para 9
- <sup>8</sup> Scottish Government letter 21 February 2011: para 10