

**Religious Observance Policy****Report by Fiona Robertson, Executive Director Children, Young People and Partnerships****Report for Decision****1 Recommendations**

This report seeks Council approval to introduce two separate policies: Religious Observance in Schools; Religious and Moral Education in Non-Denominational Schools and Religious Education in Roman Catholic Schools, replacing the policy on Religious Observance in Schools.

**2 Purpose of Report/Executive Summary**

Following a review of the council's Religious Observance Policy and the available guidance, it is proposed to replace it with two new policies:

- [Religious Observance in Schools \(Part I\)](#)
- [Religious and Moral Education in Non-Denominational Schools and Religious Education in Roman Catholic Schools \(Part II\)](#)

**Date:** 06/06/2023

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### 3 Background/Main Body of Report

Religious Observance (RO) has an important role in the development of learners in terms of being: a successful learner; confident individual; responsible citizen and; an effective contributor. It should also provide opportunities for the school community to reflect upon and develop a deeper understanding of their contribution to the school and wider communities.

Following a review of the current policy, it is proposed to replace it with two separate policies: Religious Observance in Schools Policy and Religious and Moral Education in Non-Denominational Schools and Religious Education in Roman Catholic Schools Policy.

These two policies reflect Curriculum for Excellence and apply to all primary and secondary schools, including specialist provisions. It has been prepared in consultation with relevant parties and in conjunction with the following guidance:

- The Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) Briefing Paper 16 - [Religious Observance \(Time for Reflection\)](#), which supports planning and delivery of RO in practice.
- Paragraph 6 of schedule 1 of the [Education \(School and Placing Information\) \(Scotland\) Regulations 2012](#), which provides for what a school's handbook should say about how the school plans and provides its curriculum, including RO.
- The guidance issued by the Scottish Government - [Curriculum for Excellence: Religious Observance](#).
- [School Handbook: guidance - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)
- [Scottish Catholic Education Service | SCES | supporting and promoting Catholic education in Scotland](#)

The policies are available for review in Appendix B or using the links below:

- [Religious Observance in Schools \(Part I\)](#)
- [Religious and Moral Education in Non-Denominational Schools and Religious Education in Roman Catholic Schools \(Part II\)](#)

## **4 Report Implications (Resource, Digital and Risk)**

### **4.1 Resource**

There are no resource implications anticipated from the implementation of the new policies

### **4.2 Digital**

There are no digital implications directly arising from this report.

### **4.3 Risk**

The current policy has been in place for some time and needs to be updated or replaced.

### **4.4 Ensuring Equalities (if required a separate IIA must be completed)**

EQIA available

### **4.4 Additional Report Implications (See Appendix A)**

See Appendix A

## **Appendices**

**Appendix A – Additional Report Implications**

**Appendix B – Background information/Links**

## **APPENDIX A – Report Implications**

### **A.1 Key Priorities within the Single Midlothian Plan**

Reducing the gap in learning outcomes

### **A.2 Key Drivers for Change**

Key drivers addressed in this report:

- Holistic Working
- Hub and Spoke
- Modern
- Sustainable
- Transformational
- Preventative
- Asset-based
- Continuous Improvement
- One size fits one
- None of the above

### **A.3 Key Delivery Streams**

Key delivery streams addressed in this report:

- One Council Working with you, for you
- Preventative and Sustainable
- Efficient and Modern
- Innovative and Ambitious
- None of the above

### **A.4 Delivering Best Value**

Every decision involved in preparing this policy is considered from a Best Value perspective.

### **A.5 Involving Communities and Other Stakeholders**

The development of this policy is driven by the needs of our schools and the expanding populations in some of our communities.

### **A.6 Impact on Performance and Outcomes**

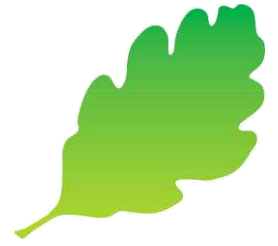
N/A

### **A.7 Adopting a Preventative Approach**

N/A

### **A.8 Supporting Sustainable Development**

N/A



## Midlothian Council Policy: Religious Observance in Schools

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<b>Document type</b>	<b>Policy</b>
<b>Approved by</b>	
<b>Approval date</b>	<b>Day Month Year</b>
<b>Senior Responsible Officer</b>	<b>Michelle Strong, Education Chief Operating Officer</b>
<b>Author</b>	<b>Children, Young People and Partnerships</b>
<b>Scheduled for review</b>	<b>August 2025</b>

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## 2. Policy statement

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The policy document provides a formal framework for religious observance in schools.

The policy and associated procedure document will ensure consistency across all schools.

## 3. Scope

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This policy covers religious observance for pupils attending primary and secondary education.

## 4. Definitions

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**RO:** Religious Observance

**R.C. school:** Roman Catholic school

**Denominational:** Roman Catholic School

**Non-Denominational:** Non Roman Catholic

**Catholic Liturgy:** Public Worship

**Chaplains:** a member of the clergy in charge of the chapel

**Mass:** the central act of worship

## 5. Policy content

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### 6. Statement (Introduction)

The Education (Scotland) Act 1980 (“the 1980 Act”) continues to provide the statutory basis for local authorities to provide Religious Observance (RO) in Scottish schools.

This policy reflects Curriculum for Excellence and applies to all primary and secondary schools, including specialist provision. It should be considered in conjunction with the Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) Briefing Paper 16 - [Religious Observance \(Time for Reflection\)](#), which supports planning and delivery of RO in practice.

It should be read alongside paragraph 6 of schedule 1 of the [Education \(School and Placing Information\) \(Scotland\) Regulations 2012](#), which provides for what a school’s handbook should say about how the school plans and provides its curriculum, including RO - ‘the provision for religious instruction and observance for pupils and arrangements for a pupil’s parent who wishes to exercise the parent’s right to withdraw that pupil.’

This policy is based on the guidance issued by the Scottish Government - [Provision of Religious Observance in Scottish Schools - March 2017](#)



## 7. Terminology

Religious Observance is defined as follows:

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

We recognise that whilst the Scottish Government and its partners (e.g. Education Scotland) use the term Religious Observance, schools may feel that a different name for the events that meet their Religious Observance requirements will be more appropriate to their individual context and culture. Therefore, the use of the term ‘Time for Reflection’ might be considered more appropriate by some schools. This term is also used in other contexts, such as in the Scottish Parliament. Therefore, this guidance uses the term Religious Observance (RO) but the guidance is equally applicable to ‘Time for Reflection’.

Religious Observance is a ‘whole-school activity’, by which we mean members of the school community, including staff, pupils, parents and representatives of faith and nonfaith groups and communities, may take part.

Where the term ‘parents’ is used, this includes guardians and any person who is liable to maintain or has parental responsibilities.

All schools are expected to develop and publish their own statements of practice on religious observance based on this policy. There will be opportunities in terms of the principles and practice to maximise the benefits of joint approaches within our Associate School Group clusters.

## **8. Diversity**

Scotland is a society with a longstanding Christian tradition. However, Midlothian has, for many generations, also been home to other faith and belief traditions. As Midlothian continues to grow, we can expect to become increasingly diverse in the range of faith and belief traditions represented across the county.

RO in schools needs to be developed in a way which reflects and understands this diversity. It should be sensitive to our traditions and origins and should seek to reflect these but it must equally be sensitive to individual spiritual needs and beliefs, whether these come from a faith/belief or non-faith perspective.

## **9. Approach**

RO has an important part to play in the development of the learner's four capacities: a successful learner, confident individual, responsible citizen and an effective contributor. It should also provide opportunities for the school community to reflect upon and develop a deeper understanding of the dignity and worth of each individual, and their contribution to the school and wider communities.

Midlothian welcomes the tradition that, in Roman Catholic denominational schools, Catholic Liturgy will largely shape the nature and frequency of RO activities in the classroom and in the wider school community. So, at times, children and young people will be invited to participate in, and sometimes to lead, prayer and reflection in classrooms and at assemblies. At other times, to honour particular occasions or feasts, chaplains will lead school communities in the celebration of Mass and other forms of liturgical celebration.

In recognition of Scotland's Christian heritage, non-denominational schools are also encouraged to draw upon the rich resources of this tradition when planning RO. However, school communities typically include pupils and staff from a variety of faiths and belief perspectives,

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 RO without compromise to their personal beliefs.

At present in non-denominational schools, whole-school assemblies are the most likely context where RO might take place. There should be a clear distinction between assemblies devised for the purpose of RO and assemblies for other purposes such as celebrating success. The precise form will be determined by each school's policy, but these might include opportunities for class, year, stage or whole-school RO as well as involvement by pupils and others, including school partners such as school chaplains and other faith/belief or non-faith leaders, in planning and presentation.

#### **10. Faith/Belief Representatives**

Midlothian values the important and varied contributions that chaplains and other representatives of faith/belief or non-faith groups can make to the life of a school, through involvement in RO as well as sometimes in acts of worship, RME and a broader pastoral role. Head Teachers are encouraged to engage in full discussion with any such representatives they wish to be involved in the planning and the implementation of RO. When such representatives are involved in supporting RO, their own beliefs should be respected and they should not be asked, or expected, to compromise them.

#### **11. Frequency and Nature of Religious Observance**

RO needs to take place sufficiently frequently to have an impact on the spiritual development of the school community. It is, however, the quality of such occasions which is of greatest importance.

It is important to balance the frequency which would have a positive impact on children and young people with the need to ensure that the experiences are meaningful and inclusive. Every school should provide opportunities for RO several times in a school year, in addition to traditional celebrations central to the life of the school community. This

will require careful planning, and the school community as well as parents and carers should be involved in making decisions about frequency. We recognise that many primary schools value weekly RO as part of their regular assembly programme and will wish to continue with this providing it represents a varied programme.

## **12. Communication**

As explained in Curriculum for Excellence Briefing Paper 16, school handbooks should describe the provision of Religious Observance and also explain arrangements for those who wish to exercise the parental right to withdraw a child or young person from Religious Observance. To support parents in making decisions about Religious Observance, schools are expected to set a clear rationale for the approach taken and to involve parents and children and young people in decisions about the Religious Observance programme.

The Education (School and Placing Information) (Scotland) Regulations 2012 (paragraph 6 of schedule 1), makes provision for what a school's handbook should say about how the school plans and delivers its curriculum, including RO. That includes:

- how a pupil's parents will be consulted about what pupils learn at the school;
- how a pupil's parents will be informed of any sensitive aspects of learning;
- how a parent can arrange for a pupil to be withdrawn from RO.

[The Scottish Government's 'School Handbook Guidance'](#) explains the Regulations and provides local authorities and schools help to develop contents for their handbooks.

## **13. Parental Right to Withdraw**

There is a statutory provision in section 9 of the 1980 Act for parents to withdraw their children from participation in RO. This right should always be made known to parents and their views respected. Parents

should be provided with sufficient information on which to base a decision about exercising this right.

The Scottish Government considers that RO complements other aspects of a pupil's learning and is an important contribution to pupils' development. It should also have a role in promoting the ethos of a school by bringing pupils together and creating a sense of community. Schools are therefore encouraged to inform parents of this without applying pressure to change their minds.

There is no equivalent statutory right to withdraw afforded to children and young people. However schools should include children and young people in any discussions about aspects of their school experience, ensuring their views are taken into account. Doing so is in line with the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 and is especially relevant as children and young people become older and take more responsibility for their own learning.

Where a parent chooses a denominational school for their child's education, they choose to opt in to the school's ethos and practice which is imbued with religious faith and religious observance. In denominational schools, it is therefore more difficult to extricate a pupil from all experiences which are influenced by the school's faith character.

Where a pupil is withdrawn from RO, schools should make suitable arrangements for the pupil to participate in a worthwhile alternative activity. In no circumstances should a pupil be disadvantaged as a result of withdrawing from RO.

#### **14. Chaplains and Other faith group Leaders**

Chaplains and other faith group leaders should be valued and Head teachers are encouraged to engage in discussion with Chaplains and other faith group leaders in the planning and implementation of religious observance.

### **15. Early Learning and Childcare Settings (ELCs)**

There is no formal requirement for Religious Observance in ELCs. However, ELC classes may take part in Religious Observance opportunities as part of the whole school community. There are many existing opportunities to help children develop an early awareness of different religious and cultural groups and their traditions

### **16. Religious Observance and Worship in schools**

As mentioned above, where a school community is continuous with a faith community (such as in a denominational school) worship may be considered to be appropriate as part of the formal activity of the school.

The Religious Observance Review Group concluded with the following statement:

“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, non-religious groups, chaplains and other faith leaders.”

When members of a non-denominational school community including pupils, parents and representatives of faith groups and communities, wish to have opportunities for organised acts of worship, Head Teachers should consider these requests positively and make suitable arrangements if possible. Such events may be distinct, although it is likely that they will be complementary to the school’s provision of RO.

### **17. Facilities**

Consideration should be given to providing appropriate facilities in schools for RO. Locations need to be considered in the light of the size and diversity of participating groups. Locations for RO and worship

should be considered in the planning and design of new and refurbished school buildings, to provide facilities which meet school and community needs.

## **18. Support**

[Education Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence, Briefing Paper 16](#) sets out the most up to date advice and guidance around the planning and delivery of Religious Observance/Time for Reflection.

[The Scottish Catholic Education Service](#) offers guidance and exemplar materials to support denominational schools on aspects of RO and School Chaplaincy.

## **19. Conclusion**

Midlothian Council and schools will continue to work with school communities to plan and deliver high quality RO, in line with this policy and CfE Briefing Paper 16 in particular, and taking into consideration the requirements of the Education (School and Placing Information) (Scotland) Regulations 2012. Schools should use their self-evaluation and the school improvement plan to ensure arrangements for RO are regularly reviewed and continually improved to develop practice and to take account of the guidance provided and views of staff, parents, pupils and partners.

## **20. Implementation**

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The policy will be implemented from with immediate effect. The policy will be shared on the Midlothian Council website. School Handbooks should be updated to reflect the new policy.

## **21. Roles and Responsibilities**

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Midlothian Council's Education Chief Operating Officer has overall responsibility for this policy.

## 22. Related documents

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- [Education \(Scotland\) Act 1980](#)
- [Religious Observance - Time for Reflection | Self-evaluation | National Improvement Hub \(education.gov.scot\)](#)
- [School Handbook: guidance - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)
- [Curriculum for Excellence: religious observance - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)
- [Scottish Catholic Education Service | SCES | supporting and promoting Catholic education in Scotland](#)

## 23. Integrated impact assessment

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All new and revised policies must be subject to an integrated impact assessment to ensure that the Council is compliant with legislation.

## 24. Risk assessment

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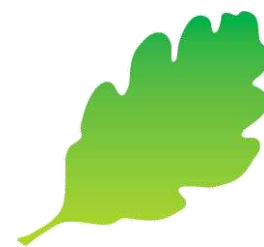
The risk of not having a consistent, clear and published policy means that parents/carers are not kept informed of this process and pupils are not able to access school education.

## 25. Review

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This policy will be reviewed on a two-year cycle with the next review being August 2025 by Children, Young People and Partnerships.





**Midlothian Council Policy:**  
**Religious and Moral Education in Non-Denominational Schools and Religious Education in Roman Catholic Schools**

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<b>Document type</b>	<b>Policy</b>
<b>Approved by</b>	
<b>Approval date</b>	<b>Day Month Year</b>
<b>Senior Responsible Officer</b>	<b>Michelle Strong, Education Chief Operating Officer</b>
<b>Author</b>	<b>Children, Young People and Partnerships</b>
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## Policy statement

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The policy document provides a formal framework for religious and moral education (RME) in non-denominational schools and religious education in Roman Catholic schools (RERC).

The policy and associated procedure document will ensure consistency across all Midlothian schools.

## Scope

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This policy covers RME/RERC for pupils attending primary and secondary education.

## Definitions

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**RO:** Religious Observance

**R.C. school:** Roman Catholic school

**Denominational:** Roman Catholic School

**Non-Denominational:** Non Roman Catholic

**Catholic Liturgy:** Public Worship

## Religious and Moral Education and Religious Education

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### Introduction

Midlothian Council believes that religious and moral education in non-denominational schools and religious education in Roman Catholic schools make an important contribution to the development of our children and young people as successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens. Education about faith and belief in non-denominational schools and education in faith in denominational schools contributes to the development of the whole person, allowing children and young people to consider, reflect upon, and respond to important questions about the meaning and purpose of existence, the range and depth of human experience and what is ultimately worthwhile and valuable in life.

This curriculum area increases children and young people's awareness of the spiritual dimension of human life through exploring the world's major religions and views, including those which are independent of religious belief, and considering the challenges posed by those beliefs and values. It supports children and young people in developing and reflecting upon their own values and their capacity for moral judgement.

Through increasing awareness and appreciation of the value of individuals within a diverse society, children and young people can develop responsible attitudes to other people. It is intended that this awareness and understanding will assist in counteracting prejudice and intolerance as children and young people consider issues such as sectarianism and discrimination more broadly.

The Education (Scotland) Act 1980 continues to impose a statutory duty on local authorities to provide religious education in Scottish schools. The Scottish Government guidance<sup>1</sup> reflects the implementation of Curriculum for Excellence across all of Scotland's schools.

This policy clarifies the current position regarding the provision of religious and moral education in non-denominational schools (RME) and religious education in Roman Catholic schools (RERC). It is intended to assist schools and practitioners when planning the curriculum.

Religious Observance is covered in a separate policy.

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<sup>1</sup> [Curriculum for Excellence: religious and moral education - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot/curriculum-for-excellence/religious-and-moral-education)

## Section 1 - Religious and Moral Education in Non-Denominational and Religious Education in Roman Catholic Schools

Religious and moral education in non-denominational schools and religious education in Roman Catholic schools is one of the eight core curriculum areas within Curriculum for Excellence (CfE). It should contribute to the totality of the curriculum through the delivery of the experiences and outcomes as part of a broad general education and as a continuing core subject throughout the senior phase S4 to S6. The principles and practice papers for both RME in non-denominational schools and RERC in Roman Catholic schools and the corresponding experiences and outcomes enable the education service and individual schools to take full consideration of local circumstances and community expectations and to involve parents, learners and the wider community when planning for teaching and learning. In Roman Catholic schools the experiences and outcomes should be delivered in line with the guidance provided by the Scottish Catholic Education Service<sup>2</sup> (SCES).

SCES advises that the CfE 'Principles and Practice' document is essential reading for teachers to enable them to work with the experiences and outcomes for RERC. SCES also advises that full understanding of these principles and practice can only be achieved by reading them in conjunction with **This is Our Faith** which sets out the content of the RERC curriculum.

## Section 2 - Learning Through Religious and Moral Education and Religious Education

Learning through this curriculum area enables children and young people to:

- recognise religion as an important expression of human experience;
- learn about and from the beliefs, values, practices and traditions of Christianity and the world religions selected for study, other traditions and viewpoints independent of religious belief;
- explore and develop knowledge and understanding of religions, recognising the place of Christianity in the Scottish context;
- investigate and understand the responses which religious and non-religious views can offer to questions about the nature and meaning of life;
- recognise and understand religious diversity and the importance of religion in society;
- develop respect for others and an understanding of beliefs and practices which are different from their own;

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<sup>2</sup> [Scottish Catholic Education Service | SCES | supporting and promoting Catholic education in Scotland](#)

- explore and establish values such as wisdom, justice, compassion and integrity and engage in the development of and reflection upon their own moral values;
- develop my beliefs, attitudes, values and practices through reflection, discovery and critical evaluation;
- develop the skills of reflection, discernment, critical thinking and deciding how to act when making moral decisions;
- make a positive difference to the world by putting their beliefs and values into action
- establish a firm foundation for lifelong learning, further learning and adult life.

### **Section 3 - Planning learning, teaching and assessment using the Midlothian RME Curriculum Framework in non-denominational schools and 'This is Our Faith' in RC Schools.**

#### Key Messages for schools and practitioners

What to do:

- Become familiar with the 'On track' statements in the RME Curriculum Framework or the 'I can, I know, I recognise' statements in 'This is Our Faith' and the Curriculum for Excellence RME Principles and Practice paper<sup>3</sup> or the Curriculum for Excellence Religious Education in Catholic Schools Principles and Practice Paper.
- Plan and organise learning in a way which provides space and time for depth of learning.
- Plan for progression (look forward and backwards to help gauge progress and build towards the next stage), particularly at key points of transition.
- Make connections across levels and subjects to aid planning for interdisciplinary learning.
- Practise effective moderation within and between levels, subjects, departments and schools.
- Use the progression statements to plan for assessment.
- Use the progression statements to assess whether learners are making suitable progress towards the national standards expected.
- Use the evidence to plan next, challenging steps in learning.

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<sup>3</sup> [Religious and moral education | Curriculum areas | Curriculum for Excellence | Policy drivers | Policy for Scottish education | Scottish education system | Education Scotland](#)

- When reporting give clear, positive and constructive feedback about children's and young people's learning and progress.
- When reporting create an agenda for discussions between learners and those teaching and supporting.
- Discuss the progression frameworks within and across your school to achieve a shared understanding of the national standards expected in RME and RE.

What not to do:

- Avoid undue focus on individual progression framework statements.
- Avoid spending time collating excessive evidence to assess learners' achievement.
- Do not assess the framework statements individually. Plan periodic, holistic assessment of children's and young people's learning.
- Do not tick off individual progression statements.

The same messages can be applied to the RME benchmarks.

## **Section 4 - Religious Education in RC Schools**

All RC schools are expected by the Bishops' Conference of Scotland to follow guidelines established by the Catholic Education Commission on the provision of adequate time for religious education within the school curriculum. These guidelines indicate a requirement for a minimum of 2.5 hours per week in primary school and 2 hours per week in all stages of secondary school. In all secondary stages this minimum time allocation is expected by the Commission to be provided through 2 periods of religious education classes per week and enriched by additional activities throughout the school year.

The relevant legislation on the management of denominational schools in Scotland states that:

*"A teacher appointed to any post on the staff of any such school by the education authority shall be required to be approved as regards religious belief and character by representatives of the church or denominational body in whose interest the school has been conducted".*

For those teaching posts which impact on the teaching of religious education, teachers will, in addition, be expected to have obtained an appropriate teaching qualification in Catholic Religious Education.

The process of learning in religious education in RC schools assists children and young people to make an informed mature response to God's call to relationship. This encourages children and young people to act in accordance with an informed conscience in relation to matters of morality through developing their knowledge and understanding of significant aspects of Catholic Christian faith.

The role of the wider parish community plays an important part in the delivery of religious education. Active learning approaches to learning and teaching, including collaborative learning, will encourage children and young people to discuss and share ideas, experiences and moral challenges in a variety of ways. Such opportunities are not only provided by the teacher but by parents and families and in local parish and community settings. Schools are encouraged to use the rich resources available from the local, national and global community when planning their programmes of study.

## **Section 5 - Religious and Moral Education in non-denominational schools**

It remains that schools and local authorities must provide RME in non-denominational schools to every child and young person in accordance with legal requirements. This is statutory for all pupils attending primary and secondary education and includes those in S5 and S6. Children and young people deserve the opportunity to have this taught in a meaningful and progressive way.

*Building the Curriculum 3* states the importance of subject specialism as one of the four contexts for learning. In secondary schools, the role of qualified teachers of religious and moral education and religious education is therefore very much an important one particularly when aiming to deliver high quality learning experiences and meeting principles such as depth and progression. Midlothian Council has a responsibility to ensure religious and moral education and religious education staff receive continued support and access to continuing professional development opportunities.

In order to meet statutory requirements and the principles and practices of Curriculum for Excellence, schools should plan and deliver RME as both a specific subject discipline and one which contributes to high quality interdisciplinary learning, as they do with each of the eight curriculum areas. Every child and young person can expect their education to provide them with a broad general education, and within RME this includes well planned experiences and outcomes across Christianity, world religions and developing beliefs and values. Schools are required to consider how this is met and apply careful planning to ensure an appropriate balance of subject specific learning and interdisciplinary learning so that the entitlement to all experiences and outcomes up to and including the third curriculum level is met. There is scope to increase higher order skills and critical thinking through developing learning based on the experiences and outcomes to encourage deeper learning. Although there is no prescribed time allocation for core Religious and Moral Education in S4-S6, it is statutory that it should be taught until the end of S6. The approaches taken up to and including the third curriculum level should be built on within the core element of religious and moral education in the senior phase to ensure continued progression, depth and personalisation and choice. RME should also contribute to learning and development through the other contexts for learning, that is the ethos and life of the school community and the opportunities provided for personal achievement.



## **Section 6 - Early Learning and Childcare Settings (ELCs)**

There is no formal requirement for RME or RERC in ELCs. However, ELC classes may take part in religious opportunities as part of the whole school community. There are many existing opportunities to help children develop an early awareness of different religious and cultural groups and their traditions

## **Section 7 - The right to withdraw**

Under section 9 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980, the conscience clause advises that parents have a statutory right to withdraw children from participation in religious and moral education in non-denominational schools and religious education Roman Catholic schools. Schools should provide parents with sufficient information on which to base a decision, and ensure that parents are aware of the content of the religious and moral education or religious education that the school wishes to undertake. This is especially relevant within the context of Curriculum for Excellence since this area of their education contributes to pupils thinking for themselves and making their own decisions about what they believe to be true about human living. Without this aspect of their education, learners will not enjoy the full benefits of Curriculum for Excellence.

Where a child or young person is withdrawn, schools should make suitable arrangements for them to participate in a worthwhile alternative activity. In no circumstances should a pupil be disadvantaged as a result of withdrawing from religious and moral education or religious education. An additional factor which parents should consider is that in choosing a denominational school for their child's education, they choose to opt in to the school's ethos and practice which is imbued with religious faith and it is therefore more difficult to extricate a pupil from all experiences which are influenced by the school's faith character.

## **Section 8 - Support and Advice**

Support and advice on the delivery of the experiences and outcomes can be found on the Education Scotland website, and for the delivery of religious education in Roman Catholic schools on the website of the Scottish Catholic Education Service.

Curriculum for Excellence, Principles and Practice

<https://education.gov.scot/Documents/rme-pp.doc>

## **Implementation**

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The policy will be implemented from with immediate effect. The policy will be shared on the Midlothian Council website. School Handbooks should be updated to reflect the new policy.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

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Midlothian Council's Education Chief Operating Officer has overall responsibility for this policy.

### Related documents

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- [Education \(Scotland\) Act 1980](#)
- [Religious Observance - Time for Reflection | Self-evaluation | National Improvement Hub \(education.gov.scot\)](#)
- [School Handbook: guidance - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)
- [Curriculum for Excellence: religious observance - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)
- [Scottish Catholic Education Service | SCES | supporting and promoting Catholic education in Scotland](#)

### Integrated impact assessment

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All new and revised policies must be subject to an integrated impact assessment to ensure that the Council is compliant with legislation.

### Risk assessment

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The risk of not having a consistent, clear and published policy means that parents/carers are not kept informed of this process and pupils are not able to access school education.

### Review

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This policy will be reviewed on a two-year cycle with the next review being August 2025 by Children, Young People and Partnerships.