



THE SCOTTISH OFFICE
Education Department

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Circular No. 6/91

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The *Chief* Executive of the
Regional or Islands Council

Copy to: Directors of Education

15 March 1991

Dear Sir/Madam

**PROVISION OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE IN
PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

1. This Circular describes and explains the Secretary of State's policy on the teaching of religious education and the provision of religious observance in primary and secondary schools; and sets out action which the Secretary of State invites education authorities to take in planning the provision of religious education and religious observance. The Circular is applicable to all primary and secondary schools, including special schools, although the Secretary of State recognises that a number of schools, and particularly denominational schools, by their nature already match its terms in their provision of religious education and religious observance.
2. In formulating this guidance the Secretary of State has taken into account the requirements of current legislation as contained in the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 and the advice contained in the following reports: the Millar report, "Moral and Religious Education in Scottish Schools" (1971); HM Inspectorate interim reports, "Learning and Teaching in Religious Education" (1986) and "Religious Observance in Primary and Secondary Schools" (1989); and Bulletins 1 and 2 of the former Consultative Committee on the Curriculum, "A Curricular Approach to Religious Education" (1978) and "Curriculum Guidelines for Religious Education" (1981). He has also sought and had regard to the views of representatives of churches and other interested bodies.
3. In this Circular "religious education" refers to courses of religious education provided throughout primary, secondary and special schools (denominational or non-denominational); "religious studies" refers to courses leading to certification in terms of the Scottish Certificate of Education (SCE) or the National Certificate (NC); and "religious observance" refers to occasions set aside for different forms of worship.

General

4. The Secretary of State is of the view that religious education and religious observance are valid and important educational experiences at all stages in primary and secondary schools. Religious education should receive the attention and facilities merited by its fundamental place in the curriculum. Syllabuses of religious education should in all schools be based on Christianity as the main religious tradition of Scotland but should also take account of the teaching and practices of other principal religions. Religious education should promote understanding of and respect for those who adhere to different faiths. This principle should inform religious education in all schools, but in schools where there are significant numbers of children of religious traditions other than Christianity it will have particular point. The aim should be as far as possible to adopt an approach to all faiths which is sensitive to the views of members of those faiths.

5. For those parents who are unable to give their acceptance there is a statutory right to withdraw their children from religious education and a parallel right to withdraw their children from religious observance. These rights should always be made known to parents and their wishes respected.

6. The Secretary of State considers that religious observance complements religious education and is an important contribution to pupils' spiritual development. It can also have a subsidiary role in promoting the ethos of a school by bringing pupils together and creating a feeling of corporate identity. In non-denominational schools religious observance should be of a broadly Christian character. But where appropriate schools may wish to organise special acts of observance for particular religions. Recommendations are given below about the frequency of religious observance. Regularity is necessary to ensure an impact on pupils' experience. It is, however, the quality of such occasions which is of paramount importance.

7. Most education authorities, and many schools, have policy guidelines governing the provision and content of religious education and religious observance. Education authorities are invited to review them in the light of this Circular. Education authorities and schools which do not have such policy statements are invited to develop them in the light of this Circular. It is important that such guidelines are widely known and observed. School Boards will have a particular interest in religious education and religious observance and policies should be formulated in discussion with them.

The Primary Stages

8. Religious education should be provided for all pupils in accordance with the guidance offered in the SED Working Paper No 1 on The Balance of the Primary Curriculum; this recommends a minimum of 10% of time for the curricular area of religious and moral education. Aspects of moral education will occur from time to time in other curricular areas which have their own recommended minimum time allocations. This should not detract from the time allocated to the religious and moral education curricular area. Advice on the content of religious and moral education will be offered within the 5-14 Development Programme.

9. All pupils should take part in religious observance not less than once a week. The precise form of observance will be determined by school policy which will take into account factors such as the roll of the school and the availability of accommodation but opportunities should be provided throughout each session for observance to take place in individual classes, or by stage or as a whole school; there should also be opportunities for the involvement of pupils and others including school chaplains in planning and presentation.

The Secondary stages

10. Religious education should be provided for all pupils in accordance with the recommendations of the SCCC's Curriculum Design for the Secondary Stages. This recommends for the Religious and Moral Education Mode a notional minimum of 5% of curriculum time in S1 / S2, a minimum of 80 hours over 2 years in S3 and S4 and a

continuing element within the context of personal and social development which should feature in the curriculum of all pupils in S5 and S6. Again, aspects of moral education will occur from time to time in other areas of the curriculum with their own time allocations but this should not detract from the time allocated to the Religious and Moral Education Mode. It is desirable that opportunities should be given to pupils to choose certificated courses in Religious Studies (See para 3). Where there is a shortage of staff or resources, however, priority should be given to the provision of religious and moral education for all pupils. Guidance on the content of religious education syllabuses is already available and will be supplemented for S1 and S2 within the 5-14 Development Programme.

11. All pupils should take part in religious observance at least once a month and preferably with greater frequency. The views of School Boards should be taken fully into account in determining frequency of observance. Again the precise form will be determined by schools policy but there should be opportunities for year, stage or whole school observance as well as involvement by pupils and others including school chaplains in planning and presentation.

Chaplains

12. The Secretary of State recognises the valuable contribution to school life which can be made by the active participation of a chaplain or team of chaplains. The main involvement of chaplains should be in the planning and conduct of religious observance, in pastoral duties with staff and pupils and, on occasions, as contributors to the school's religious education programme. The Scottish Education Department is prepared to continue to assist with advice on the organisation of courses for chaplains.

Effect on Staffing

13. The guidelines set out in the SCCC Curriculum Design for the Secondary Stages and the guidance in this circular should have the effect of establishing the place of religious education in the curriculum, and as a result will require a gradual increase in the number of specialist teachers of the subject. Any such increase can be attained by adjustment in the specialist balance of the teaching establishment within schools. Recently intakes to colleges of education have been expanded and the system now has the capacity to meet increases in demand for religious education teachers. Authorities should assess and make known to colleges of education their requirements for specialist religious education teachers as they implement the provisions recommended in this Circular. A number of additional teaching qualification courses are also available which allow existing teachers of other subjects to re-train to teach religious education. To encourage this, in-service training in religious education will become eligible for specific grant from 1 April 1991.

Summary

14. The Secretary of State asks education authorities to review their policies on religious education and observance and to determine a timescale within which they can implement the advice given in this Circular. It should be possible to make good progress in the provision of religious observance. The Secretary of State accepts that the recommendation for religious education will have to be implemented as staff become available. He will monitor progress.

Any enquiries about this Circular should be addressed to Mrs Belfall, telephone 031 244 4437.

Yours faithfully

J W L LONIE