

Directors of Education

Headteachers of all schools

Our ref:

21 February 2011

**CURRICULUM FOR EXCELLENCE - PROVISION OF RELIGIOUS AND MORAL
EDUCATION IN NON-DENOMINATIONAL SCHOOLS and RELIGIOUS
EDUCATION IN ROMAN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS**

Dear Colleague

Introduction

1. The Education (Scotland) Act 1980 continues to impose a statutory duty on local authorities to provide religious education in Scottish schools. This letter replaces guidance previously contained within Circular 6/91 and reflects the implementation of Curriculum for Excellence across all of Scotland's schools.

2. This letter 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 local authorities and schools when curriculum planning and sets out the continuing statutory requirements regarding RME and RERC. For ease of use this letter is divided into sections:

Section 1 Religious and Moral Education and Religious Education in Roman Catholic schools within Curriculum for Excellence.

Section 2 Religious and Moral Education in non-denominational schools.

Section 3 Religious Education in Roman Catholic schools.

3. Religious Observance is covered in a separate letter which will be issued in conjunction with this.

Section 1

Religious and Moral Education and Religious Education in Roman Catholic Schools within Curriculum for Excellence.

4. Scottish Ministers believe 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. It 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. Specifically, the process of learning in religious education in Roman Catholic 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.

5. It remains that schools and local authorities must provide religious and moral education to every child and young person in accordance with their legal requirements. Religious and moral education in non-denominational schools and religious education in Roman Catholic schools is a statutory core subject for all pupils attending primary and secondary education, including those in years S5 and S6, and it is their entitlement to have this taught in a meaningful and progressive way.

6. 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. 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 religious and moral education in non-denominational schools and religious education in Roman Catholic schools and the corresponding experiences and outcomes enable local authorities 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.

Parental right to withdraw

7. 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 and religious education in 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.

8. 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 in Roman Catholic schools. 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 2

Religious and Moral Education in non-denominational schools

9. It remains that schools and local authorities must provide religious and moral education 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.

10. *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. Local authorities have a responsibility to ensure religious and moral education and religious education staff receive continued support and access to continuing professional development opportunities.

11. In order to meet statutory requirements and the principles and practices of Curriculum for Excellence, schools should plan and deliver religious and moral education 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 religious and moral education 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. This approach 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. There is scope to increase higher order skills and critical thinking through developing learning based on the fourth level experiences and outcomes to encourage deeper learning. Religious and moral education 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. Schools and local authorities will have policies detailing their rationale and practices for the delivery of religious and moral education which are available and shared with parents, learners and the wider community.

Section 3

Religious Education in Roman Catholic Schools

12. All Catholic 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.

13. 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.

14. 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.

Support and Advice

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

<http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/learningteachingandassessment/curriculumareas/rme/index.asp>

<http://www.sces.uk.com>

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Laura Stewart', with a large, stylized initial 'L'.

Laura Stewart