

Elements of this guidance were drafted jointly with NATRE <https://www.natre.org.uk/news/latest-news/guidance-for-full-opening-of-schools-implications-for-teachers-of-re/>

## Guidance for full opening – schools – Implications for teachers of Religious education.

The Department for Education has issued [some guidance](#) this week to schools to support their planning for full opening in September 2020. The guidance covers a wide range of issues, but this article focuses specifically on section 3 of the guidance which focuses on the curriculum.

The guidance sets out three key principles that underpins the advice as follows:

- *education is not optional: all pupils receive a high-quality education that promotes their development and prepares them for the opportunities, responsibilities, and experiences of later life.*
- *the curriculum remains broad and ambitious<sup>1</sup>: all pupils continue to be taught a wide range of subjects, maintaining their choices for further study and employment.*
- *remote education, where needed, is high quality and aligns as closely as possible with in-school provision: schools and other settings continue to build their capability to educate pupils remotely, where this is needed.*

The key points we have identified in relation to RE are:

1. Where the breadth of curriculum is specified at primary and KS3, RE is specifically listed as a subject that must be part of a broad curriculum.
2. To 'catch up' schools are advised to prioritise the most important components for progression within each subject. So, while that may influence the breadth of RE, it should not mean RE is dropped from the curriculum<sup>2</sup>.
3. Schools are allowed to make some short-term modification to the curriculum at the start of the Autumn term but the aim is for all to be all back to normal as soon as possible and by the summer term at the latest.
4. If a geographical area goes into lockdown some subjects can be suspended and this may put RE at risk in some schools. NATRE have produced an extensive range of home learning materials published for all [here](#) and for members [here](#).
5. At KS4 in *exceptional circumstances* and only if it is the best interests of pupil, a subject can be 'discontinued'. If a pupil is not doing well at a specific non-core subject and dropping it would give them a better chance of achieving *significantly better* in their remaining examinations, then discontinuing a subject is permitted. However, if RE is the pupil's weakest subject, it needs to be remembered that the legal entitlement to core RE remains for all pupils.
6. The DfE advise that educational visits that do not involve overnight stays can resume in the Autumn term with the usual risk assessment. Our interpretation of this is that visits can therefore take place to places of worship, including the local church, museums, galleries etc. but extra care should be taken to ensure that social distancing and the regular use of

---

<sup>1</sup> DfE are using language here to describe their expectations for the curriculum in a way that is very similar to that used in the Ofsted Framework (See our commentary on this [here](#)). This is important, especially in Academies that are not offering their students their entitlement to a comprehensive Religious education since Ofsted expect their curriculum including RE to be 'similar in breadth and ambition' to that provided in LA maintained schools. See para 174 in School Inspection Handbook [here](#).

<sup>2</sup> This is particularly the case since this guidance does not change educational legislation which requires that all pupils, in all schools are taught RE unless they are withdrawn by their parents.

sanitizers is part of the school's risk assessment. This will include ensuring that the place visited has robust procedures in place.

7. Schools should carefully consider how to manage visitors to the school for educational purposes and ensure guidance on physical distancing and hygiene is explained to them on or before arrival.

### **Collective Worship**

There are two key lines in the DfE guidance around collective worship:

- *Groups should be kept apart, meaning that schools should avoid large gatherings such as assemblies or collective worship with more than one group.*
- *Singing, wind and brass playing should not take place in larger groups such as school choirs and ensembles, or school assemblies.*

This does not mean that assemblies or worship are not allowed but that singing, schools choirs and playing woodwind instruments in worship should not take place. Worship in large groups should be avoided but can still take place within bubble groups so long as social distancing and hygiene recommendations are followed.

This means that we will be moving to more classroom-based or small group worship next year. It might be helpful to think in the terms 'bubble worship'. We would expect collective worship to continue, there has been no legal change, and we would expect that Church schools will continue see collective worship as a central part of their distinctive offer. It might be at that community schools might roll back their provision for collective worship, but we would expect an innovative and creative response in Church schools to this challenge. We see collective worship as a crucial educational activity that is part of the expression of the school's vision.

We are planning to provide greater support to schools in this and will probably use the newly established #faithathome website on the CofE website <https://www.churchofengland.org/faith-action/faith-home/i-am-school-leader> as a central vehicle for this. There will also be a key role for dioceses in training for schools (virtually) on this. Many dioceses have been very active in uploading collective worship material on their diocesan websites during the pandemic. We are expecting this will continue into next year.

There are also some specific challenges around the right of withdrawal from collective worship (and indeed RE and Sex Ed) and what is reasonable within a bubble.

We will be publishing further guidance and support for schools in due course.

### **After school clubs**

The government has issued guidance for Education in Out of School Settings (OFSS) and that includes after school clubs. [Protective measures for out-of-school settings during the coronavirus \(COVID-19\) outbreak](#)

*We recognise that this will be logistically challenging for schools, particularly for clubs that would normally offer support across year groups, where parents are using multiple providers, or where childminders are picking up/dropping off pupils. Schools should carefully consider how they can make such provision work alongside their wider protective measures, including keeping children within their year groups or bubbles where possible. If it is not possible to maintain bubbles being used during the school day then schools should use small, consistent groups.*

However, schools and parents may be anxious about such activities and careful consideration of the school context and needs should be made before restarting clubs. Any club being run in school should follow guidelines on social distancing and hygiene. Children should, as far as possible be 'bubbled'.

*Schools can consult the guidance produced for summer holiday childcare, available at [Protective measures for out-of-school settings during the coronavirus \(COVID-19\) outbreak](#) as much of this will be useful in planning extra-curricular provision. This includes schools advising parents to limit the number of different wraparound providers they access, as far as possible.*

Derek Holloway  
School Character and SIAMS Development Manager  
July 2020