

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 ambitious¹: 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 curriculum².
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. However, we hope that the extensive range of home learning materials we have published for all [here](#) and for members [here](#), will support schools in these circumstances.
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, museums, galleries etc. but extra care should be taken to ensure that social distancing and the regular use of 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.
8. Ofsted will not carry out school inspections until January, but through the Autumn term 'collaborative discussions, taking into account the curriculum and remote education expectations' in a sample of schools will take place. This will not result in a judgement of the school although a brief letter will be published after the visit.

We are aware that the publication of this guidance was preceded by a leak that caused many members considerable concern. Do get in touch if there are further issues you would like us to raise with DfE officials.

¹ 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](#).

² 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.