

Religious Education Participation & Parental Withdrawal Policy (Senior School)



CATERHAM
SCHOOL

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Date Reviewed By Author:

September 2026

Introduction

The Caterham School family of schools, comprising Caterham Senior School, Caterham Prep School, Copthorne Prep School and The Hawthorns School and Nursery, is committed to providing an education that reflects our inclusive, respectful and proudly multi-cultural ethos. Our community welcomes pupils from a wide range of cultural, religious and non-religious backgrounds, and we value the richness that this diversity brings to school life. Religious Education (RE) forms an important part of our broad and balanced curriculum, supporting pupils in developing an informed understanding of different faiths, worldviews and ethical perspectives, and encouraging them to engage with others in a spirit of curiosity, empathy and respect.

Legal and Regulatory Context

As independent schools, we are required under the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 to provide a curriculum that is broad and balanced, encourages respect for others including those of different faiths and beliefs, and does not promote partisan views. Unlike maintained schools, independent schools are not subject to the statutory framework that grants parents an automatic legal right to withdraw their child from Religious Education. Accordingly, there is no statutory right of withdrawal from RE within the Caterham School family of schools. Nevertheless, we recognise that families may hold strong religious or philosophical convictions, and we are committed to engaging with parents thoughtfully, respectfully and constructively when concerns arise.

Educational Importance of Religious Education

Religious Education taught primarily through our Philosophy and Theology department, holds an important place within Caterham School because it contributes significantly to pupils' intellectual, moral and cultural development. Through RE, pupils encounter a wide range of religious and non-religious worldviews, enabling them to develop a deeper understanding of the beliefs, values and traditions that shape individuals, communities and societies. This learning supports the development of critical thinking, ethical reasoning and respectful dialogue, all of which are essential skills for life in a diverse and interconnected world. RE also plays a vital role in fostering empathy and cultural literacy, helping pupils to appreciate the perspectives of others and to engage constructively with difference. In a school community that is proudly multi-cultural and inclusive, Religious Education strengthens our shared commitment to mutual respect, open-mindedness and the celebration of diversity. It is therefore considered an integral part of a broad and balanced curriculum across all schools within the Caterham family of schools.

Our Approach to Religious Education

Across all schools in the Caterham family, Religious Education is educational rather than confessional. Teaching is designed to inform rather than indoctrinate, and pupils learn about a range of religions and worldviews, including non-religious perspectives. Lessons promote critical thinking, cultural awareness and mutual respect.

Requests for Withdrawal from Religious Education

Although there is no automatic legal right to withdraw a child from Religious Education, the Caterham family of schools will consider parental requests on a case-by-case basis. Parents may make such a request on the basis of religious belief, philosophical belief or conscientious objection. The school will take into account the nature of the request, the specific elements of the curriculum involved, the age and stage of the pupil, the school's educational aims and ethos, and the practical implications for supervision and curriculum continuity. The Head of the relevant school, or their delegate, will make the final decision. Any request to withdraw a pupil from any aspect of Religious Education must be made in writing to the Head. Parents may be invited to meet with the Head or a senior member of staff to discuss the request, the curriculum content and any possible accommodations. The purpose of such a meeting is to ensure clarity and mutual understanding rather than to challenge or pressure parents regarding their beliefs. A written outcome will be provided once the request has been considered.

Supervision and Alternative Arrangements

If a withdrawal is granted, the school will provide appropriate supervision during the period of withdrawal. The school is not required to provide alternative teaching, although parents may supply suitable independent work if they wish. Any arrangement for withdrawal will be reviewed annually or sooner if circumstances change.

Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed every three years, or sooner if required by changes in legislation or school practice.

Equality, Inclusion and Respect

The Caterham School family of schools is deeply committed to ensuring that every pupil feels valued, respected and included, whatever their faith, belief, cultural background or personal worldview. Our schools are proudly multi-cultural communities in which diversity is not only welcomed but actively celebrated as a source of strength, learning and enrichment. We believe that pupils flourish when they are educated in an environment where differences are understood, explored and appreciated, and where all members of the community are encouraged to engage with one another with openness, curiosity and kindness.

Our approach to Religious Education reflects this commitment. RE provides a structured and thoughtful space in which pupils encounter a wide range of religious and non-religious perspectives, enabling them to develop the knowledge, empathy and critical awareness needed to navigate an increasingly diverse and interconnected world. We view this as an essential part of preparing pupils to become responsible, informed and compassionate global citizens. In considering any parental request for withdrawal from RE, we remain guided by our belief that education should broaden horizons, deepen understanding and foster respectful dialogue across differences. We therefore approach such requests with care, sensitivity and a strong commitment to upholding the inclusive values that define the Caterham School family.