

The New Ofsted Framework and its impact on RE, SMSC and Collective Worship

Schools Communication sent 8th September 2014.

For the attention of: Head teacher, Governors and others, for example Senior Leadership Team (SLT) members.

Phases: Infant, Junior, through Primary, Secondary

There are a number of significant changes in the Ofsted Inspection Handbook updated in August 2014 which supports the adjusted Ofsted Framework, also published on this date. Some of these changes relate specifically to religion and religious issues. It is likely, therefore, that there will be closer scrutiny of RE (Religious Education), SMSC (Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development) and Collective Worship during future Ofsted inspections.

The new Ofsted Inspection Handbook is added to this communication and it can also be accessed through this link: <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/school-inspection-handbook>

For all schools there have been some changes to the way matters of faith and religion are articulated in relation to SMSC, especially in relation to what is meant by Spiritual (paragraph 131), Social (paragraph 133) and Cultural (paragraph 134). Half-day SMSC courses run regularly through HTLC, the next is in early October. During the forthcoming course the implications of the different articulation of matters of faith and religion in relation to SMSC will be fully discussed.

PLEASE NOTE there is a significant change in regard to the profile of Religious Education in the latest Ofsted Inspection Handbook. However, when reading this document it is important to consider what kind of a school you are working in.

If you are a **local authority school that is not of a religious character** then it will be important to note paragraph 18. There is a clear reminder to all schools that they 'must conform to the legal requirements for non-faith schools' (page 10, paragraph 18). This points out what this means for religious education (RE) in maintained schools and that it 'should be based on the locally agreed syllabus established by the local Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE)' (ibid). The Locally Agreed Syllabus in Hampshire '*Living Difference Revised 2011*' sets out the required pedagogical approach to developing the RE curriculum, the time allocation recommended for all key stages as well as how to assess for progression and so on. Evidence suggests this way of teaching RE is effective and that it has the capacity to raise standards illustrated by, for example, reference to Hampshire's GCSE data analysis and standards achieved at KS1 and 2 reported to SACRE over many years.

In an **academy** the paragraph to look out for is the same - paragraph 18 on page 10 of the handbook. 'Academies may, but are not required, to follow the locally agreed RE syllabus'. They can devise their own syllabus, but it must be in line with the legislation that underpins the locally agreed syllabus as mentioned above' (ibid). The Locally Agreed Syllabus in Hampshire '*Living Difference Revised 2011*' sets out the pedagogical approach to developing the curriculum, the time allocation recommended for all key stages as well as how to assess for progression and so on.

Evidence suggests this way of teaching RE is effective and that it has the capacity to raise standards illustrated by, for example, reference to Hampshire's GCSE data analysis and standards achieved at KS1 and 2 reported to SACRE over many years. The important point here for headteachers, governors and SLT is when the Hampshire Agreed Syllabus is used there is a time allocation recommendation in that syllabus which should not be ignored. *Living Difference Revised* is well thought of nationally and applies a particularly engaging and successful approach to teaching and learning in RE and there would, therefore, have to be a strong argument of a school that wishes to develop its own syllabus.

For those academies who might want to develop their own curriculum for RE they should refer to the Non-Statutory Guidance for RE published in 2010 also attached here. Although the guidance is itself non-statutory, the information in the guidance is statutory. This document refers readers to all the statutes which underpin the SACRE's work and this document is the way to find out the 'legislation that underpins the locally agreed syllabus' (Ofsted Handbook 2014, page 10, para 18).

For local authority schools and academies the responsibilities of governors and head teachers with respect to RE are set out on page 16 of the 2010 document referring to legislation from 2005.

If you are **a school of a denominational character, whether an local authority school or academy**, paragraphs 14, 15, 16 and 17 need to be taken into account of the same handbook document.

It has already been noted that a number of Ofsted reports from school inspections in Hampshire since January 2014 have mentioned RE. This has been discussed by SACRE at its last meeting. Papers relating to this meeting can be read in due course by following this link: http://www3.hants.gov.uk/councilmeetings/meetingssummary.htm?date_ID=1324

The changes to the Ofsted Inspection Handbook also make reference to collective worship in schools (see pages 8 paragraph 15 to page 10 paragraph 19). Although the legislation has remained unchanged for a number of years, the handbook reiterates the requirements for collective worship providing some clarity in relation to the character of collective worship in faith and non-faith academies, in voluntary aided and voluntary controlled schools and local authority maintained schools.

If you would like to discuss any of these matters with me personally, do not hesitate to get in contact by email in the first instance.

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