

REPORT TO: EDUCATION COMMITTEE – 20 MARCH 2006
REPORT ON: REVISED GUIDANCE ON RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE
REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION
REPORT NO: 192-2006

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 This report brings to the attention of the Education Committee the revised policy on Religious Observance in Dundee schools.

This policy sets out the aims of and key issues related to Religious Observance.

In so doing it endorses Circular 1/2005: Provision of Religious Observance in Scottish Schools (SEED) and takes account of the key recommendations of the 2004 Report of the national Religious Observance Review group. The policy indicates how Dundee City Council will address these recommendations and develop practice in line with the Circular and the Review Group Report.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 The Education Committee is recommended to

i. approve the revised policy which endorses Circular 1/2005 and note the definition and aims of Religious Observance described in the Circular:

“community acts which aim to promote the spiritual development of all members of the school community and express and celebrate the shared values of the school community”.

ii. agree the implementation plan

iii. require the Director of Education to report on progress in its implementation by February 2008.

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 The revised policy is subject to annual review and update and will be contained within the Education Department budget for 2005/2006.

4.0 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The revised policy contains no significant implications for this area. Religious Observance complements religious education and plays an important role in the spiritual development of all within the school community.

5.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1** The Religious Observance policy will help to ensure equality of opportunity for pupils in Dundee schools. It takes forward the development of Citizenship and takes cognizance of the Education Department Action Plan for Racial Equality.

There is a statutory provision for parents to withdraw children from participation in Religious Observance. This right is made known to parents and their wishes respected. No child will be disadvantaged as a result of withdrawing from Religious Observance.

6.0 BACKGROUND

- 6.1** The city of Dundee is recognised as being a multi-racial, multi-faith community where the values of respect, tolerance and mutual understanding are promoted in all our schools.

In response to Circular1/2005 and the 2004 National Report on Religious Observance a working group of secondary, primary and nursery head teachers was established chaired by the Director of Education to review Dundee's policy on Religious Observance. Draft guidance was issued for consultation to schools, parents, faith groups and the RCRE Advisory group. The response to the consultation has been broadly in agreement with the proposals. Mechanisms are in place to involve pupils.

The contribution of the role of Chaplains in Religious Observance and the need for training are recognised. In supporting Religious Observance chaplains' own religious stance will be respected and they will not be asked to compromise their own beliefs.

In reviewing the policy on Religious Observance the Department will build on the good practice that currently exists in our schools and will continue to provide guidance for schools and information leaflets for parents and pupils.

It is recognised that there are distinctive arrangements related to Religious Observance in Roman Catholic schools. These will be progressed through the Roman Catholic Religious Education Advisory group.

- 6.2** The aims of Religious Observance:

- to promote the spiritual development of all members of the school community
- to express and celebrate the shared values of the school community.

These aims will be used to give all stakeholders a clear sense of the key goals:

- building a sense of community

- understanding spiritual development
- celebrating shared values.

7.0 CONCLUSION

- 7.1** This revised policy will provide a framework upon which further guidance and support for schools will be carried forward. The Department will work with the school community to plan the content, frequency and location of Religious Observance.

This review of the department's policy on Religious Observance is in line with Circular 1/2005 and the 2004 National Review Group report and is in line with the Education Department plan.

The policy will be subject to ongoing review and evaluation. It will be updated and amended as appropriate to take account of local and national guidance. The broad aims identified in this policy will now be used to shape detailed action plans for developments and initiatives across the department. These will be the subject of further reports to the Education Committee.

8.0 CONSULTATION

- 8.1** Consultation will continue to take place with all stakeholders: faith groups, parents, schools, pupils and CPD providers in order to implement the revised policy and develop good practice in line with Circular 1/2005 and the 2004 Religious Observance Review Group report.
- 8.2** This Report has been subject to consultation with the Chief Executive, Depute Chief Executive (Finance) and Depute Chief Executive (Support Services).

9.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 9.1** The following background papers were relied upon in the preparation of this report:

Circular 1/2005 and the 2004 Report of the Religious Observance Review Group.

ANNE WILSON
Director of Education

13 March 2006

Religious Observance in Dundee Schools

Policy

January 2006



Policy on Religious Observance In Dundee Schools

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INTRODUCTION

In the HMIE report, *Standards and Quality in Secondary Schools: Religious and Moral Education, 1995-2000*, some concern was expressed about some aspects of Religious Observance and in particular its frequency. There then followed a review of arrangements regarding all aspects of Religious Observance undertaken by the Religious Observance Review Group. Its report was published in 2004. As a result of this report the Scottish Executive Education Department [SEED] issued a revised Circular 1/2005: Provision of Religious Observance in Scottish Schools [Appendix 1].

Dundee City Council endorses the findings and recommendations outlined in Circular 1/2005. This policy draws from both the Circular and the Review Group's report and applies to all primary, secondary and special schools and off-site establishments.

The policy looks to ensure that Religious Observance is relevant and appropriate to pupils' experience. In addition it seeks to be in tune with recent major developments in Scottish education such as the '*Standards in Scotland's Schools Act etc 2000*', '*The National Priorities in Education*' and the recently published '*Educating For Excellence*'. All of these developments emphasise 'nurturing and developing the whole person, one who can make a positive contribution to the society in which she or he lives'.

Many school communities are characterised by a diversity of religious beliefs and practices reflecting a range of religious and other stances. It is important that all pupils and staff can participate with integrity in the forms of Religious Observance devised by their school without compromise to their personal faith stances. This can best be guaranteed by involving a range of people from the school and community in the preparation, planning and presentation of the assembly or other gathering. Pupils should have a key role in this process.

One implication of this diversity is that the forms of Religious Observance may differ from school to school. Schools are therefore encouraged to make decisions based

on local needs and circumstances. Full consultation should take place with all interested parties on how Religious Observance can be implemented. The unifying principle behind the different approaches to Religious Observance will be the aims set out in this paper.

AIMS OF RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE

The aims of Religious Observance as defined in Circular 1/2005 are as follows:

‘to promote the spiritual development of all members of the school community; to express and celebrate the shared values of the school community.’

DEFINITION OF RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE

The report of the Review Group defines the term for use in schools in Scotland as:

‘community acts which aim to promote the spiritual development of all members of the school community and express and celebrate the shared values of the school community.’

Three key issues which emerge from this definition and which are developed further in the following sections are

- building a sense of community
- understanding spiritual development
- celebrating shared values

Building A Sense Of Community

Regular assemblies or other gatherings for Religious Observance provide opportunities for the school community to reflect on, and develop, a deeper understanding of the dignity and worth of each individual and the shared values of the school community. Good Religious Observance strengthens pupils’ sense of belonging to their school

It is a basic premise that the way in which Religious Observance in schools is implemented should always be justifiable on educational grounds.

Understanding Spiritual Development

Spiritual development *'includes being helped to recognise, reflect upon and develop a deeper understanding of the value and worth of each individual which comes from one's dignity as a person'*.

The spiritual dimension comes from what makes us human and this can be seen and expressed in many ways. There are many contexts across the curriculum that encourage pupils to consider matters from a spiritual perspective. Specifically with regard to Religious Observance the Report identifies 'sensing' as a key experience for the spiritual development of pupils. Further information on aspects of sensing and on the characteristics of a spiritually developing person are contained in Appendix 2

The term "spiritual" applies to all pupils. The potential for spiritual development is open to every one and is not confined to the development of religious beliefs. In spite of the move away from involvement with formal religion in contemporary Scottish society, there is evidence of a growing interest in the spiritual dimension. Many people outwith formal religion would use the term spiritual to describe key aspects of their experience. Spirituality 'needs to be seen as applying to something fundamental in the human condition... it has to do with the unique search for human identity...'. (Spiritual and Moral Development, National Curriculum Council).

Religious Observance plays an important role in the spiritual development of all within the school community.

Celebrating Shared Values

Many schools would identify and promote values such as *'honesty, liberty, justice, fairness and concern for others'* as common shared values in our society. It is also true that different communities hold values that are particular to their own tradition. These values should be acknowledged, the right of people to hold them should be respected and pupils should be encouraged to reflect on these values and the life stances which they reflect.

Within the context of a school community, shared values give a sense of belonging and help to underpin all aspects of its life. The process of understanding and developing the shared values should involve pupils, staff, parents, churches, other faith communities and the wider

community in which the school is set. Participation in the process is an essential element in terms of ownership of the agreed values.

RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE AND ORGANISED WORSHIP

Religious Observance is not concerned in the main with organised worship. Worship is a free response of an individual and community to what is considered worthy of worship. This response involves three elements: belief, desire to worship and the commitment to life stances. An organised act of worship is based on the assumption that those present share these elements. The appropriate context for an organised act of worship is within the informal curriculum as part of the range of activities offered for example by religious groups, chaplains and other religious leaders. Good arrangements exist already in Dundee schools which invite pupils to participate in organized worship if they choose. Religious Observance in denominational schools will continue to include opportunities for organized acts of worship [see page 7]

ASSEMBLIES AND RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE

The approach to Religious Observance should be that outlined in Circular 1/2005, [paragraph 8] namely that “ *in recognition of Scotland’s Christian heritage, schools are encouraged to use the rich resources of this tradition when planning religious observance. Many school communities contain pupils and staff from faiths other than Christianity or with no faith commitment. This should be taken fully into account in supporting spiritual development. It is of central importance that all pupils and staff can participate with integrity in forms of religious observance without compromise to their personal faith stances.*”

At present school assemblies are the most common vehicle for delivering Religious Observance. A clear distinction has to be drawn between assemblies devised for the delivery of Religious Observance and assemblies which support other purposes. Communicating day-to-day administrative arrangements and information about extra-curricular activities at an assembly is important for the life and work of the school. However, this should be kept separate from occasions that are specifically set aside for Religious Observance. It is important for those organizing and leading Religious Observance that its overall integrity and

purpose are kept distinctive and not compromised by the inclusion of routine administrative announcements.

FREQUENCY OF RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE

The frequency of Religious Observance needs to balance the impact on the spiritual development of the school community with providing a valuable and inclusive experience. Good Religious Observance requires careful planning by schools, particularly in the early stages of moving towards any new arrangements.

In Dundee schools it is recommended that every school should provide opportunities for Religious Observance at least six times in a school year in addition to traditional celebrations central to the life of the school community. While ensuring that Religious Observance is sufficiently frequent, the emphasis should be on quality of the experience for pupils rather than quantity.

CHARACTERISTICS OF GOOD RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE

In order to ensure that the experience of Religious Observance is of a high quality those planning and leading it should look to ensure that the following characteristics are evident.

Location: A communal location within the school is the most suitable venue for Religious Observance. All schools have areas such as assembly halls or gymnasias which have the potential for being appropriate locations for Religious Observance. It is important that every attempt is made to ensure that pupils can participate comfortably in the Religious Observance. Seating, ventilation, lighting and sound are important considerations in ensuring that pupils can give their full attention to what is being presented. In addition, to take account of the fact that Religious Observance may at times be organised on a group basis, schools should also look to have a smaller area available for Religious Observance. This space could also be available for organised acts of worship or private reflection.

Leading: The headteacher, staff, chaplains, pupils and visitors from the community or organizations can all make effective contributions to Religious Observance. Sharing the leading brings many benefits such as offering a range of perspectives on a variety of issues for pupils to

consider. Good planning and clear expectations are important to ensure that the experience appeals to pupils and engages their interest.

Sensitively Exploring Issues: Religious Observance should invite pupils through an interesting and appealing stimulus to consider and reflect on a range of issues that relate to their experience. As in good teaching the stimulus for reflection should look to draw on

- incidents which occur in the life of the school or in the local, national or international communities,
- a programme of values which the school wishes its pupils and staff to reflect upon
- the annual cycle of religious festivals.

An Open And Reflective Atmosphere: Good Religious Observance happens in atmosphere where pupils feel relaxed and open to learn from what is being said and done. In order to achieve a mood of respectful attentiveness, assembly leaders should consider the appropriate use of music, presentation media and sensitive lighting, and procedures for entering and leaving the area. Silences can be powerful and offer a space for individual pupils to begin their response to what has been shared. Recent work on Quiet Assemblies has proved very effective particularly with primary school pupils. Further details are available from the Church of Scotland Website [Appendix 3]

CHAPLAINS

A chaplain plays an important role in the life and work of the school as a resource person and as someone who can offer pastoral and spiritual support. A full discussion should take place between headteacher and chaplain on how Religious Observance should be planned and implemented in order to address the needs of the school community. The discussion should be based on the premise that the way in which Religious Observance in schools is implemented should be justifiable on educational grounds.

The role of the chaplain needs to be made clear and regularly reviewed in discussion with the Headteacher. Chaplains can only work in school at the invitation of the headteacher and so it is important that expectations are clear and explicit from both parties. Proselytizing is not acceptable within whole school Religious Observance

Many schools have chaplaincy teams which include representatives from a range of traditions who cooperate with other members of staff and pupils in the planning, preparation and presentation of acts of Religious Observance. Each member of the chaplaincy team will be able to draw on the rich resources of their own religious tradition. These resources can be used by the group responsible for Religious Observance as stimulus material relevant to the school community's experience and understanding. Some chaplains may also draw on material from other sources including stories from other religions. Where chaplains are not comfortable with this, their stance should be respected and other members of the Religious Observance team would plan and implement the assembly or other activity when material from other traditions or faiths is being used.

Within the context of organised acts of worship within schools, the chaplain will be addressing members of their own faith communities. In this context a confessional approach is appropriate. This issue will be further explored in the development of guidance on the role of chaplains and chaplaincy teams in schools.

THE RIGHTS OF PARENTS

Under the terms of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980, parents have the right to ask for their child[ren] to be withdrawn from Religious Observance. In the past schools have dealt with such requests with sensitivity and understanding and it is expected that this approach will continue. Headteachers are encouraged to meet with any parent wishing to withdraw their child to ensure that they are clear about the school policy on Religious Observance. In particular, parents should be reassured that Religious Observance in Dundee schools adopts an open and respectful approach and does not seek to compromise the beliefs of any pupils or their families.

DENOMINATIONAL SCHOOLS

It is recognized that in denominational schools, there is a distinctive emphasis on nurturing the faith of pupils in line with gospel values. This is achieved through the school ethos, the religious education curriculum and in particular religious observance. In denominational schools organized acts of worship are considered appropriate as part of the formal activity of the school and will continue to feature in religious observance. Specific support and guidance for developing religious observance in denominational schools is available to schools through the

Diocesan Advisory Service, the Scottish Catholic Education Service and the Tayside RCRE advisory group.

NURSERY SCHOOLS

There is no formal requirement for Religious Observance in nursery schools and classes. However, there are many opportunities to help children develop an early awareness of different religious and cultural groups and their traditions. By marking significant religious celebrations and exploring shared values as well as matters of common concern, children can build up a sense of their own uniqueness. In this way their journey of spiritual development begins. Such activities provide important foundational experiences for young children on which primary and secondary school can build.

RACE EQUALITY POLICY

Central to this policy is the principle of respect for others. Religious, cultural and personal characteristics permeate and enrich the life and work of our schools. This diversity of belief and tradition provides an ideal context in which pupils can learn about and so learn from what is important in the lives of others. The approach to Religious Observance in this policy recognizes and welcomes diversity and promotes respectful understanding. In this way the guidance is fully consistent with other council policies relating to Race Equality.

SUPPORT FOR SCHOOLS

Support materials are to be produced by LTScotland. A local support group will be established to provide a summary of advice and guidance for schools to support developments in Religious Observance. From Session 2005/06 onwards there will be a regular programme of CPD for staff and chaplains. A list of helpful support materials and websites is contained in Appendix 3

IMPLEMENTATION OF REVISED GUIDANCE

There will be full consultation with schools and all interested parties on the proposed revised guidance on Religious Observance. It is anticipated that final revised guidance will be available to schools for the start of session 2005/06. Schools should then begin to consider its implementation as part of their ongoing development planning cycles. Further support materials and CPD activities will follow in the course of the next few sessions.

IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE

Draft policy issued to schools, pupil council groups, parent groups and religious groups for consultation	April - October 2005
Policy approved by Education Committee	March 2006
Information leaflets published for parents	May 2006
Policy implementation and inclusion of RO into school planning and management calendar	From session 2006/07
Programme of CPD support for schools and chaplains	From session 2006/07 onwards

Circular 1/2005**PROVISION OF RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE IN SCOTTISH SCHOOLS**

Dear Colleague

Introduction

This circular describes and explains the Scottish Executive's policy on the provision of religious observance in Scottish schools and sets out action for local authorities in planning the provision of religious observance. The Circular replaces the arrangements for religious observance set out in Circular 6/91 and applies to all primary and secondary schools, including special schools. The policy on religious education set out in Circular 6/91 remains in force meantime.

Scotland is a society with a longstanding Christian tradition. The most recent census showed that Christianity remains the main religious influence in Scotland. 67% of the Scottish population reported having a religion. 65% reported being members of the Church of Scotland, Roman Catholic Church or other Christian churches. However, Scotland has for many generations also had other faith and belief traditions, never more so than at present as Scotland increasingly becomes a place for many cultures and beliefs. This trend is set to continue as Scotland sets out to attract people from other communities as part of Scottish Executive policy. We can expect Scotland to become increasingly diverse in the range of faith and belief traditions represented. Religious observance needs to be developed in a way which reflects and understands this diversity. It should be sensitive to our traditions and origins and should seek to reflect these but it must equally be sensitive to individual spiritual needs and beliefs, whether these come from a faith or non-faith perspective.

The 2004 report of the Religious Observance Review Group made a number of recommendations about development of religious observance in schools (the full report is available at www.scotland.gov.uk/library5/education/rorg-00.asp). This circular responds to the recommendation that the Scottish Executive Education Department should review the circular on religious observance. In preparing this guidance, account has been taken of the current legislation as contained in the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 and the special note contained in the HMIE report *Standards and Quality in Secondary Schools: Religious and Moral Education 1995-2000*.

Religious Education

Scottish Executive policy on religious education, as set out in Circular 6/91, is supported by the 5-14 National Guidelines on religious and moral education. The guidelines will be assessed against the principles and purposes of *A Curriculum for Excellence* during the

second stage of the curriculum review. The importance of religious education for all school children will be emphasised in the review. When the review of the existing guidelines has been completed, we will update the religious education element of Circular 6/91 and the national guidelines.

Response to the Religious Observance Review Group Report

The recommendations of the Religious Observance Review Group outline sensitive and tactful solutions which will allow schools to provide religious observance which is an inclusive, valuable and meaningful experience for all. Scottish Ministers see religious observance as an important educational experience for children and young people at all stages of primary and secondary school. In accepting the Group's recommendations, Ministers believe that future actions can build on Scotland's strong Christian traditions without compromising them, and also promote the understanding and acceptance of other faiths and beliefs.

Definition of religious observance

Ministers accept the definition of and aims of religious observance proposed by the Religious Observance Review Group:

- *community acts which aim to promote the spiritual development of all members of the school community and express and celebrate the shared values of the school community.*

Approach

Each individual within a school community should be enabled to develop as a successful learner, confident individual, responsible citizen and effective contributor. Religious observance should have an important part to play in this development. It should also provide opportunities for the school community to reflect on, and develop, a deeper understanding of the dignity and worth of each individual and their contribution to the school and wider communities.

In recognition of Scotland's Christian heritage, schools are encouraged to use the rich resources of this tradition when planning religious observance. Many school communities contain pupils and staff from faiths other than Christianity or with no faith commitment. This should be taken fully into account in supporting spiritual development. It is of central importance that all pupils and staff can participate with integrity in forms of religious observance without compromise to their personal faith stances.

At present school assemblies are the most common vehicle for delivering religious observance. There should be a clear distinction between assemblies devised for the purpose of religious observance and assemblies for other purposes such as celebrating success. The precise form of religious observance will be determined by each school's policy within the local authority's framework, but these might include opportunities for class, year, stage or whole school observance as well as involvement by pupils and others, including school chaplains, in planning and presentation.

Materials and training events will be provided to support schools and authorities.

Frequency of religious observance

Religious observance needs to take place sufficiently frequently to have an impact on the spiritual development of the school community. It is, however, the quality of such occasions which is of greatest importance.

The Review Group acknowledged the need to balance the frequency which would make a positive impact on young people with the need to ensure that the experiences are valuable and inclusive. This will require careful planning by schools. The group concluded that every school should provide opportunities for religious observance at least six times in a school year, in addition to traditional celebrations central to the life of the school community, and preferably with greater frequency. We recognise that many primary schools value weekly religious observance as part of their regular assembly programme and will wish to continue with this. The school community should be involved in making decisions about frequency.

Parental Right to withdraw

There is a statutory provision for parents to withdraw children from participation in religious observance. This right should always be made known to parents and their wishes respected. Parents should be provided with sufficient information on which to base a decision.

Scottish Ministers consider that religious observance complements religious education and is an important contribution to pupils' development. It should also have a role in promoting the ethos of a school by bringing pupils together and creating a sense of community. Schools are therefore encouraged to inform parents of this without applying pressure to change their minds.

Where a child is withdrawn from religious observance, schools should make suitable arrangements for the child to participate in a worthwhile alternative activity. In no circumstances should a child be disadvantaged as a result of withdrawing from religious observance.

Chaplains

Scottish Ministers value the important and varied contributions that chaplains and other faith group leaders make to the life of the school, for example in their involvement in religious observance, acts of worship, religious and moral education and a broader pastoral role. Headteachers are encouraged to engage in full discussion with chaplains in planning and implementation of religious observance. In supporting religious observance, chaplains' own religious stances should be respected and they should not be asked, or expected, to compromise their religious beliefs.

Worship in schools

The Religious Observance Review Group considered the relationship between organised acts of worship and religious observance. They concluded with the following statement:

Where the school, whether denominational or non-denominational, is continuous with a faith community, that community's faith in the "focus of worship", may be assumed and worship may be considered to be appropriate as part of the formal activity of the school. Where, as in most non-denominational schools, there is a diversity of beliefs and practices, the review group believes that the appropriate context for an organised act of worship is within the informal curriculum as part of the range of activities offered for example by religions, groups, chaplains and other religious leaders.

Ministers endorse this approach as complementary to schools' policy on religious observance and would ask schools to consider this statement when planning for religious observance.

Members of the school community, including pupils, parents and representatives of faith groups and communities, may wish to have opportunities for organised acts of worship within the informal curriculum of the school. Ministers would encourage headteachers to consider these requests positively and make suitable arrangements if appropriate personnel and accommodation can be provided.

Facilities

Consideration should be given to providing appropriate facilities in schools for acts of religious observance and worship. Locations need to be considered in the light of the size and diversity of participating groups. Locations for religious observance and worship should be considered in the planning and design of new and refurbished school buildings, to provide facilities which meet school and community needs.

Support

We recognise that schools will need support to enable them to action these revised arrangements. The Scottish Executive Education Department has therefore commissioned Learning and Teaching Scotland to develop, in collaboration with faith groups, the following support materials and resources for schools:

- guidance and exemplar materials to support schools in developing high quality activities for religious observance;
- guidance and exemplar materials on the role of chaplaincy teams; and
- self-evaluation tools for schools to assist them in evaluating the quality of religious observance provided for pupils.

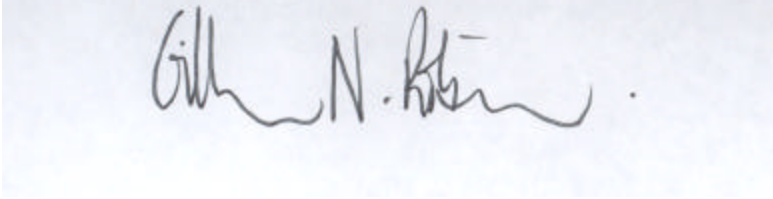
Training events will be organised by Learning and Teaching Scotland to provide support on the use of these materials.

Conclusion

Local authorities and schools are invited to:

- work with the school community to plan the content, frequency, and location of religious observance, in line with this Circular and the Review Group report;
- review their policies on religious observance, and develop practice in line with this Circular and the Review Group report; and

- introduce necessary changes into planning processes as soon as possible.
22. Please send a copy of this circular to the Headteacher of each school in your area.

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light blue background. The signature reads "Gill N. Robinson" in a cursive style.

DR GILL ROBINSON
Qualifications, Assessment and Curriculum Division

Spiritual Development

The Report of the Religious Observance Review Group identifies a number of key experiences that contribute to pupils' spiritual development. One of these is the capacity to sense. Sensing draws from experiences in which pupils explore their feelings and attitudes and build their awareness and insights. Sensing includes:

Sensing mystery: experiences of awe, wonder and mystery about the natural world, human achievement and for some a divinity

Sensing values: attitudes and feelings about what is really important, what really matters

Sensing meaningfulness: the ability to make connections or to see potential patterns in one's life which give it meaning

Sensing a changed quality in awareness: the feeling of being 'at one' with nature, oneself and others

Sensing 'otherness': the sentiment that humans are more than their physical elements

Sensing challenge: being challenged and moved by experiences such as love, beauty, goodness, joy, compassion, injustice, evil, suffering, death.

Sensing can often be a formative process where pupils think, consider and reflect on significant matters in their lives and so become clearer about how their stance on these matters is developing. Sensing is an important but at times untidy experience for pupils in that it can provide challenge as much as reassurance, pose questions as much as offer answers.

The characteristics of a spiritually developing person are many and varied.

The following list is taken reproduced from 'Opening Windows - Spiritual Development in the Primary School' [ISBN 1-902234-29-4] and with permission of the publishers, The Stapleford Centre, The Old Lace Mill, Frederick Road, Stapleford, Nottingham, NG9 8FN

Characteristics of a spiritually developing person

Alert - a keen, shrewd and observant awareness of all that is happening around and within.

Accepting - able to accept different attitudes and opinions with dignity, wisdom and humility. This does not however imply 'laissez faire' or evading responsibility to speak or act when necessary.

Aware of mystery - willing to admit lack of full knowledge and possessing a wondering attitude towards the awesomeness of creation.

Challenging - a willingness to 'grasp the nettle' and to confront issues when necessary.

Creative - an ability to use one's imagination and creativity in all aspects of life.

Compassionate - able to empathise with others and to be 'alongside' them.

Committed to struggle - the appreciation that concerted and energetic action is part of the spiritual life.

Courageous - the ability to meet disappointment, difficulties, pain and anxiety without being overwhelmed.

Curious - an open hearted and questioning attitude to knowledge and understanding and a willingness to be surprised.

Energetic - motivated and with a sense of determination and purpose.

Focussed - an ability to be comfortable with both stillness and silence. Not distracted by the peripheral or ephemeral and able to maintain a sense of purpose.

Forgiving - an attitude which allows for mistakes, one's own and others', and seeks a path of reconciliation, reparation and renewal.

Generous - a willingness to share and an ability to both give and receive.

Gentle - an attitude which seeks the welfare of others and is non-manipulative whilst maintaining strength of purpose. It includes humility but does not imply weakness.

Holistic - an awareness of the interrelatedness of all life and a sense of the importance of balance.

Hopeful - a willingness to see opportunities rather than obstacles in life and to recognise new beginnings.

Joyful - a sense of deep wellbeing and

ease. A positive response to life not to be confused with happiness.

Loving - an affectionate, respectful, caring attitude towards other people and the environment.

Peaceful - a willingness to act collaboratively and cooperatively and to choose actions which promote harmony but not lethargic or passive.

Questing - a sense of continuing pilgrimage, discovery and search for meaning.

Realistic - earthed in the realities of situations and able to make judgements with discernment. Aware of the 'dark night of the soul'.

Receptive - open to and able to assimilate the experiences of life and not be unduly deflected by either success or failure.

Reconciling - an ability to integrate and hold together the many aspects of life in creative tension.

Responsible - an awareness of responsibility for oneself and actions and for others.

Reverent - an attitude of awe and humility in the presence of great beauty, creativity or wonder.

Risk-taking - a willingness to take a 'leap of faith', to commit oneself to a cause or person without knowing the detailed outcome.

Thankful - a sense of gratitude for all that is given and for the gift of life itself.

Trusting - a willingness to believe the best of situations and others.

Truthful - a commitment to truth and a willingness to be open to new ideas and perspectives.

Visionary - the ability to see beyond the obvious and immediate and beneath the surface values and to hold to a sense of purpose.

Helpful Resources

A full list will follow but might include:

Quiet Assemblies

www.churchofscotland.org.uk/boards/education/edqainroduction.htm

Festivals Calendar [Dundee City Council Education Department]

Making Sense of Spiritual Development [The Stapleford Centre,2001]

Spiritual Development in the Primary school – Opening Windows [The Stapleford Centre,2002]

Fischy Music materials www.fischymusic.com