

POLICY STATEMENT

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AT POST-16

The Board believes that the contribution of religious education (RE) and collective worship to the enrichment of individuals, communities and social and working life should not be underestimated. At post-16 level RE is concerned with belief, and with the cultural, creative, transformative, reflective and cohesive dimensions of social and spiritual well-being. Church of England secondary schools in the diocese with post-16 provision will recognise this potential and will plan and resource the curriculum offer accordingly.

Religious education at this level has significant potential. The following points could be made:

- (i) As a subject with such skills as critical analysis, isolation of truth, transformation of ideas into rationally refined argument, accepting and making sense of ambiguity, RE has much to offer to a work-related curriculum. It can match many of the requirements of employers such as literacy, flexibility, autonomy, broader perspectives, confidence and maturity in the expression of concepts and ideas.
- (ii) RE's distinctiveness is its capacity to engage and interact with the subtleties and intricacies of belief and faith in a diverse and conflicting society. It deals with the sensitive inner world of others' spiritual expression which displays itself in belief, practice and action, both in private and public life – the one essentially affecting the other.
- (iii) Education for employment, vocational education, needs to be refined if we are to avoid an entirely utilitarian view of human purpose in education. RE can lead to reflective enlightened working practices that recognises the need for co-operation with others and the understanding of human interrelatedness.
- (iv) Based on research in psychological development and RE, it is possible to conclude that some elements of education dependent on cognitive maturation, (such as, critical reflection, the ability to cope with ambiguity and conflict, sensitive and sophisticated inter-personal, inter-faith and inter-cultural interaction), will need to be provided for at post 16 level. To cease to provide RE at 16+ is perhaps to stunt the growth of critical being, what Archbishop Rowan Williams calls "reciprocal definition".
- (v) The range of different courses that can be created through linking RE and vocational education is potentially very exciting. Students could study courses on the conflict of belief in matters of life and death related to health and social care practice; they could examine the effect of market forces in business on local faith communities; an exploration could be made of human resources and company practice in relation to belief about human dignity and purpose (the divine uniqueness of each human being); religious symbolism in the expressive arts could be another study. The scope of RE as a vibrant and vital resource for enrichment in the post 16 curriculum should be consciously recognised and promoted in a church secondary school.

May 2000 (Schools Committee)