on the National Curriculum and its assessment⁸ on the time to be allotted to RE at Key Stages 1-4. His recommendations assume that 36 hours per year will be devoted to RE at Key Stage 1, 45 per year at Key Stages 2 and 3, and around 5 per cent of total curriculum time at Key Stage 4. The SCAA draft model syllabuses also assume around 40 hours per year.

GCSE and agreed syllabuses

- 40 When a conference draws up an agreed syllabus, it should take into account the needs of pupils at Key Stage 4 who want to take a GCSE in Religious Studies. Since all pupils are required to follow the agreed syllabus at this stage, it will be helpful if agreed syllabuses are designed to be compatible, as far as possible, with GCSE courses. Otherwise, schools will have to provide religious education for such pupils in addition to the GCSE course.
- 41 All GCSE (and other external) qualifications, and the syllabuses associated with them, are subject to approval. The arrangements for the approval of gualifications are set out in Circular 2/93⁹. The School Examinations and Assessment Council issued in June 1993 revised criteria for the approval of GCSE courses in Religious Studies¹⁰.
- 42 It is open to conferences to devise and seek approval for their own syllabuses for GCSE, to encourage the development of such syllabuses or to invite GCSE examining groups to develop new syllabuses to meet specific requirements. Where a conference wishes to promote a new syllabus it should consult SCAA or a GCSE Examining Group. Criteria and syllabuses for GCSE and other courses leading to qualifications for pupils of compulsory school age are subject to review and approval by SCAA and may change from time to time.

RE post-16, examinations and agreed syllabuses

43 A locally agreed syllabus must cover all registered pupils in school sixth forms (note 4 on page 10). Some of these pupils may wish to take examinations in Religious Studies and it will be helpful if agreed syllabuses are designed to be compatible, as far as possible, with A and AS level qualifications.

Right of withdrawal

- 44 Nothing in the Education Act 1993 affects parents' rights, as established in the 1944 Act and re-enacted in the 1988 Act, to withdraw their children from RE if they wish. To summarise:
 - if the parent asks that a pupil should be wholly or partly excused from 1 attending any RE at the school, then the school must comply;

8 The National Curriculum and its Assessment: final report by Sir Ron Dearing, Act 1988. Statutory Approval of December 1993, available from SCAA, Newcombe House, 45 Notting Hill Gate, London W11 3JB.

9 Circular 2/93 The Education Reform Qualifications under Section 5 (which replaces Circular 6/92), and subsequent annual circulars.

10 Available from SCAA

Education Reform Act 1988 s.5

Education Reform Act 1988 s.2(1)(a)

Education Reform Act 1988 s.9(3)

Education Reform Act 1988 s.9(3)

Education Reform Act 1988 2 a pupil may, if the parent requests this, be withdrawn from the S9(4) school premises to receive RE elsewhere, so long as the LEA, or in the case of a grant-maintained school, the governing 9(6) body, is satisfied that this will not interfere with the child's attendance at school other than at the beginning or end of any school session; if the parent of a pupil attending an LEA-maintained county or 3 equivalent grant-maintained secondary school wishes him or her to receive RE according to the tenets of a particular religious denomination and this cannot conveniently be provided elsewhere, the LEA or governing body, in the case of Education Act 1944 a grant-maintained school, is required to allow such education s.26(3)+(4) within the school provided it does not consider that because of special circumstances it would be unreasonable to do so, and does not have to meet the cost: 4 where the parent of a child attending an LEA-maintained aided, special agreement, or equivalent grant-maintained school wishes that child to receive RE according to the agreed syllabus and the child cannot conveniently attend a school where that syllabus is in use, the governors (or if, in the case of LEA-maintained schools, they are unwilling to do so, the LEA) must make suitable arrangements unless Education Act 1944 they (or the LEA) considers that special circumstances would make it s.28(1B)+(1C) unreasonable to do so (see paragraph 23). 45 A school continues to be responsible for the supervision of any child Education Reform Act 1988 withdrawn by its parent from RE, unless the child is lawfully receiving religious education elsewhere (paragraph 44.2). S9(4) Exercise of right of withdrawal 46 The parental right to withdraw a child from receiving RE should be freely exercisable and a school must give effect to any such request. Parents are not obliged to state their reasons for seeking withdrawal. 47 The law does not prescribe how religious education should be taught or organised in schools. LEAs and schools should bear in mind, however, that the way in which RE is organised must reflect the duty to teach the agreed syllabus or what is provided according to a trust deed, and that parents must be enabled to exercise their rights to request Education Reform Act 1988 that their child should be excused from RE. This should not cause s9(3) problems if RE is taught as a separate subject; but particular care will be

needed to ensure that parents are able to exercise this right where schools, including primary schools, teach RE in an integrated form along with National Curriculum subjects (from which there is no

48 There will be occasions when spontaneous enquiries made by pupils on

religious matters arise in other areas of the curriculum. Circumstances will vary, but responses to such enquiries are unlikely to constitute RE within the meaning of the legislation and a parent would not be able to insist on a child being withdrawn every time issues relating to religion and spiritual values

were raised.

right of withdrawal).

- 49 Experience suggests that, to avoid misunderstanding, a head teacher will find it helpful to establish with any parent wanting to exercise the right of withdrawal:
 - the religious issues about which the parent would object to his or her child being taught;
 - the practical implications of withdrawal;
 - the circumstances in which the school can reasonably be expected to accommodate parental wishes (paragraph 48); and
 - whether the parent will require any advanced notice of such RE, and, if so, how much.