

## Supporting the needs of Jehovah's Witness pupils

### **Jehovah's Witnesses often withdraw their children from RE in school. Why?**

Jehovah's Witnesses believe that religious education is the responsibility of the child's home and family. They are aware that parents have an absolute right to withdraw their child from religious education (and collective worship), in whole or in part.

Many Jehovah's Witness families exercise their right to withdraw their children from RE in Key Stages 1 and 2 in order not to confuse their child. Where there is uncertainty about a particular lesson or activity, Jehovah's Witness parents would appreciate discussion with the school in advance: it may be that they are happy for their child to be involved.

### **What is the Jehovah's Witness attitude towards assembly and collective worship in school?**

Jehovah's Witnesses have no objection to their children attending 'assembly' (as an administrative meeting) but would not want them to attend 'collective worship' (as a religious activity). In general, Jehovah's Witness parents would appreciate early discussion with a head teacher or senior teacher about the nature of assembly and collective worship in the particular school.

### **What is the Jehovah's Witness view on sex education in the school curriculum?**

Jehovah's Witness parents would have no objection to those aspects which are included in National Curriculum science. As the law permits, however, they would want to withdraw their children from other aspects of sex education. They consider that sex education is a matter for the family. They would want the home to deal with issues like contraception (which Witnesses do not object to within marriage, though they do reject abortion).

### **Would a Jehovah's Witness student's time commitments religious activities ever clash with commitments towards school work and other activities?**

A student might be withdrawn from school for one or two days in a year in order to attend a convention as these are regarded as 'days of holy observance'. Jehovah's Witnesses place considerable emphasis on family activity in connection with both worship and recreation. This might limit a student's involvement in extra-curricular activities but would be unlikely to interfere with homework commitments.

### **Given the Jehovah's Witness attitude towards birthdays, how might a school best respond?**

Jehovah's Witnesses do not celebrate traditional religious festivals such as Christmas and Easter. They believe that there is no scriptural justification for such celebrations which they consider rooted in paganism. For the same reasons, secular occasions such as birthdays and Mother's Day are not celebrated.

Jehovah's Witness parents would therefore not want their children to participate in birthday celebrations. They recognise, however, that incidental reference to birthdays cannot be avoided and would not wish schools to become anxious about this.

### **In the light of the attitude of Jehovah's Witnesses towards Christmas, Easter and festivals from other world faiths, how would they want their children treated when others at school are involved in activities related to these festivals?**

Where lessons and activities are specifically targeted at these festivals, Jehovah's Witness parents would not want their children to participate. However, children could take part if

these festivals were being treated in a more 'academic' sense – for example, during an art lesson when a series of paintings (including ones depicting Christmas scenes) was being studied. However parents would not wish their children to take part in a Nativity Play or to make Christmas cards or decorate classrooms or Christmas trees.