

The protocol for Scripture Union Scotland staff and volunteers working in Scottish schools



Volunteering with Scripture Union Scotland is about helping children and young people explore the Bible and respond to the significance of Jesus.

This vision statement is true whether we volunteer on SU Holidays, SU Missions or in schools, but because the context of schools is quite distinct, it requires us to have a distinct understanding of what we are doing in schools and how our approach contributes to the education of children and young people. SU Scotland has been working with schools for over 70 years. We come with a serving attitude when we partner with a school; we work with the permission of the education authority and at the invitation of the head teacher. Proselytising within a school context is wholly inappropriate and it may well be that some church members and SU Volunteers will not find it possible to work within the parameters of schools work and should therefore volunteer in other areas.

Often our distinctive presence in a school is running an SU Group as part of the informal curriculum. This provides a place where children and young people can explore the Christian faith. There were around 450 such groups operating in schools across Scotland pre COVID-19 and each would be led in a way which contributes to the development of those who attend.

Curriculum for Excellence underlines the Scottish tradition of empowering children and young people to make and communicate their own decisions about belief and values; this would be our approach in SU Groups.

I can expect my learning environment to support me to:

- **understand and develop my physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing and social skills**

Health and wellbeing across learning: responsibilities of all. Experiences and outcomes

All schools recognise the added value that partners can bring to the curriculum. ... There is scope for many schools to broaden the range of partners who support Religious and Moral Education to give children and young people broader insights into the range of religious and secular beliefs which are part of our diverse Scottish society. This would help to combat the stereotypical views of religious groups which children and young people are often presented with both in school and through the media.

Education Scotland, RME 3-18 Curriculum Impact Report, Feb 2014, p35

SU Groups are open to all pupils to attend – those who have Christian faith and those of other faiths or none. We lead the group for the benefit of all children irrespective of gender, sexuality, ethnicity, ability or disability, age, political or religious persuasion. We believe that all children are of equal worth, made in the image of God, and that all have the right to hear about his love for them as expressed in Jesus Christ. We fully respect that individual children may commit to different beliefs and values, and although we are

happy to discuss the differences between Christian belief and other world views, we will refrain from criticising those who hold them. We acknowledge diversity and understand that it is everyone's responsibility to challenge discrimination.

Our activities should be designed to encourage pupils to ask questions and find answers about Christian belief. We want to give space for them to reflect and allow them to come to their own conclusions about meaningfulness and their own spiritual wellbeing.

As well as SU Groups, we work with schools and churches to deliver programmes that help pupils to experience an overview or significant areas of the Bible's story – such as Christmas and Easter.

The Bible stories chosen would be appropriate to the context and the pupil. It would also be important to ensure that the 'message' in the story is a focus, ... stressing the importance again of close liaison with local faith representatives.

Religious and moral education: Experiences and outcomes

We view all our activities as part of our contribution to the spiritual development of pupils through helping pupils learn about Christian beliefs, see authentic faith in practical action, and acquire critical tools which will enable them to develop an understanding of their own beliefs and the beliefs of others.

(Reviewed November 2023)