

## The Basic Facts: SCOTLAND

**1.** In law Education Authorities are given 'liberty to continue' the custom of religious observance in schools established in the past but they cannot discontinue this customary provision without a poll of local electors.

**2.** In effect this means that primary schools should ensure that all pupils take part in religious observance not less than once a week.

**3.** Religious observance is an occasion when 'something akin' to worship takes place. It 'has a significant part to play in transcending the informative role of religious education'. Its precise form will be determined by school policy.

**4.** The aims of religious observance are:

'to promote pupils' spiritual development, to increase their understanding of religious practices such as prayer and meditation and the religious experience which underlies them, to promote the ethos of the school through the expression and celebration of shared values and to provide opportunity for individual reflection on spiritual and moral concerns.'

**5.** In non-denominational schools it should be of a broadly Christian character, reflecting the broad consensus of Christian beliefs without being specific to any one denomination. Where appropriate, special acts may be organised drawing on other religious traditions.

**6.** 'Active participation is essential to the quality of the experience.' The best acts develop themes carefully chosen to suit children's experience and understanding and utilise a variety of methods of presentation. There should be opportunities for the involvement of pupils.

**7.** School chaplains will often contribute to religious observance, remembering that it is not the same as a congregation gathered for worship.

**8.** Parents have the right to withdraw their children.

**9.** Religious observance may take place in individual classes, by stage or as a whole school.

*Information compiled from HMI Report 1989, SOED Circular 6/91 and Religious and Moral Education 5-14, SOED 1992.*