

RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE POLICY

Date of Original Policy: May 2012

Date of Latest Policy Review: June 2017

Date of Next Review: June 2020

Religious Observance Policy

Introduction

Heathland and Whitefriars are secular schools within a Multi-Academy Trust that actively promotes the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of all pupils and staff. This policy is based upon the law in England, DfE Guidance and 2016/17 Guidance from Harrow Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE). Harrow SACRE has representation from all the major religious groups and those with no faith.

Definition:-

Religious observance is defined in our academy trust as:

Community acts which aim to promote the spiritual development of members of the school community and express and celebrate their shared values.

Guiding principles:

- Every pupil should have opportunities to achieve the highest possible standards, and the best possible education for the next stages of their life.
- Every pupil should be helped to develop a sense of personal and cultural identity that is confident and open to change, and that is receptive and respectful towards other identities.
- Every pupil should develop the knowledge, understandings and skills that they need in order to participate in Britain's multi-ethnic society, and in the wider context of an interdependent world.

Aims:

Our schools will:

- Help every pupil to recognise, reflect upon and develop a deeper understanding of the value and worth of each individual within the school community and society.
- Promote tolerance and understanding of the world religions, which informs pupils' perspective on life and their interest in and respect for different people's feelings and values.
- Encourage interest in exploring, understanding and respecting for cultural diversity and the extent of which pupils understand, accept, respect and celebrate diversity, as shown by their attitudes towards different religions, ethnic and socio-economic groups in local, national and global communities.

Legal responsibilities:-

The Heathland Whitefriars Federation welcomes its duties under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 by committing to:

- promoting equality of opportunity;
- promoting good relations between members of different racial, cultural and religious groups and communities;

Religious observance:

We respect the religious beliefs and practices of all staff, pupils and parents, and give serious and fair consideration to all reasonable requests relating to religious observance and practice.

The Directors (Trustees), members, all staff and parents have a duty of care toward all pupils and a legal obligation to ensure all children attend school regularly. Up to three days leave a year will normally be authorised for legitimate religious observance. SACRE publishes an annual list of religious festival dates on which absence may be authorised.

Religious holidays:

The school will consider a request to take a child or children out of school during term time for religious observance. The Executive Head Teacher, as with all requests to take children out of school during term time, reserves the right to deem an absence without notification or good reason as unauthorised. All requests to be made in writing using the appropriate form available from the school office.

Clothing:

All clothing or jewellery worn for religious purposes should meet with the Federation's dress code, including for physical education and sport, which ensures against discrimination and complies with SACRE guidance for religious observance and health and safety requirements.

Food:

The Federation ensures that all midday meals supplied comply with the Harrow SACRE recommendations for religious observance.

Provision for Prayers:

While the law does not require maintained schools to make provision for prayer, the Board of Directors recognises that some families would like to make requests in relation to religious observance in school. The Executive Headteacher will give fair and serious consideration to all reasonable requests for prayer or reflection.

Any such requests must to be made in writing to the Executive Head Teacher. In each school, a quiet space (Reflection Room) may be made available on request for prayer or reflection by girls and boys of any faith or none. Prayer and reflection cannot take place in learning time but may happen in timetables break or lunch times. Use of the Reflection Room must always be supervised by a member of Federation staff. Parents and non-staff adults do not have access to Reflection Rooms for safeguarding reasons.

Responsibilities:

The Board of Directors is responsible for ensuring that the school complies with the relevant legislation, and that this policy and its related procedures and strategies are implemented.

The Executive Headteacher is responsible for implementing the policy; for ensuring that all staff are aware of their responsibilities and are given appropriate training and support; and for taking appropriate action in any cases of unlawful discrimination.

All members of staff are expected work within this policy, to know how to identify and challenge cultural bias and stereotyping and to support all pupils in their care.

Information and resources

We ensure that the content of this policy is known to all staff and governors, and also, to all pupils and parents.

All staff and governors have access to a selection of resources which discuss and explain concepts of race equality and cultural diversity in modern Britain.

The Executive Headteacher is responsible for ensuring that the policy is kept under review and that its impact is evaluated.

The Board of Directors takes full responsibility for the content of the policy. Any questions or complaints should be addressed to the Chair of Directors.