



Policy on Religious Observance

Audience	Parents, Staff, Governors
Named person responsible for monitoring	Head
Agreed by Quality Assurance Committee	28 November 2018
Ratified by Governing Body	12 December 2018

Introduction

Hampstead School is proud to be an ethnically and linguistically diverse community. We are proud of our diversity, with over 60 languages spoken by students who come from many different countries. As such our school community is predicated on quality of relationships with core values strengthened by assemblies, our Thought for the Week and through what we choose to celebrate. We are committed to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and endorse Article 14: (freedom of thought, belief and religion) Every child has the right to think and believe what they want and also to practise their religion, as long as they are not stopping other people from enjoying their rights.

Hampstead School understands and actively promotes British Values of democracy, rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. We encourage all members of the school community to respect other people with particular regard to the Equality Act (2010). Hampstead School will challenge anyone who exhibit extremist opinions contrary to fundamental British Values, for example where girls are disadvantaged on the grounds of their gender or all other marginal groups are discriminated against.

Observance Leave

Hampstead School respects the major belief systems of our said community and supports the celebration of key days within these. This again is reflected via both the taught and wider curriculum. We also recognise that such religious holidays may be times of specific worship and family celebration. Where these days fall within the school term, a balance needs to be struck between supporting observance and missing learning.

Consequently, we shall authorise absence for students in accordance with parental requests for major religious holidays (e.g. Eid Ul Fitr, Diwali and Rosh Hashanah). Staff are entitled to paid religious observance leave on major religious holidays for up to 2 days per annum.

We believe this to be compliant with The Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003, whereby 'Religion or belief' is defined as 'any religion, religious belief, or similar philosophical belief'. Clearly this can be interpreted widely, and is likely to be seen to cover fringe religions and membership of cults. Prayer during the school day is covered by these provisions, as is off site observance of a particular religious festival.

Extended or Repetitive Leave

Hampstead School needs to balance religious observance with our robust expectations on attendance and the primacy of learning. In accordance with the Local Authority guidance and Department for Education, we will not authorise leave for extended religious observance such as pilgrimages or Haj. Moreover we do not allow partial absence during extended periods of special significance such as Ramadan or Lent. However, wherever possible we will accommodate religious observance during free association time within school by facilitating a quiet room on specified days. (In line with Article 9 of the Convention on Human Rights; the school is not obliged to allow any manifestation of religion at any time or place)